

# Summary of Delta Environmental Justice Interviews

## Report on Methods and Findings

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## SUMMARY

The Delta Stewardship Council (Council)'s 2019 Five-Year Review identified environmental justice (EJ) as a priority issue needing additional attention in the Council's work. The Five-Year Review recommended Council staff to prepare an issue paper to investigate the need for additional strategies, or responses to address EJ within the Delta Plan, summarize the best available science on EJ, and identify policy recommendations for the Council to consider. The Council partnered with the California Sea Grant (CASG) to conduct qualitative interview-based research with EJ organizations and advocates working across the Bay-Delta to serve as a primary data source informing the issue paper development.

Between January and May 2022, the CASG and Council EJ research team conducted 22 interviews with a wide range of organizations and individuals working on the ground and in the communities most impacted by social and environmental issues in the Delta. The interviews aimed to build a better understanding of EJ issues from the perspective of EJ communities and advocates in order to educate Council members, Council staff, and those external to the Council but working in the Delta of the most pressing EJ challenges in this region. By interviewing a wide range of organizations and advocates that work on many different issues and through many different policy channels, the interview data help to paint a more holistic picture of what EJ looks like in the Delta, rather than focusing the scope from the outset only on EJ issues within the Council's authority. The interviews will serve as a basis for identifying key issues, which communities are most impacted, how non-governmental and community-based organizations are engaging on these issues, and ideas and opportunities for government agencies to work to better address environmental injustice in the Delta. The key findings and trends from the interviews will be supplemented with other available data and literature to develop the issue paper recommendations.

Across all interviews, interviewees spoke about more than 280 EJ issues, some with more depth than others. Through data coding and analysis, these issues were grouped into primary issue categories and classified along the principles of recognitional, procedural and distributive justice. Results highlight the breadth of EJ issues raised, and then zoom in to provide in-depth qualitative summaries of eight topical issue areas that emerged as key concerns: **climate change, flood risk, water, pollution and public health, housing and unhoused communities, food security and access, tribal and indigenous justice, and recreational access.** For each of these topical areas, interview data are summarized to describe how interviewees discussed what these issues look like to communities, which communities are impacted, how EJ organizations and community members are mobilizing to address the issues, and what ideas or solutions are shared for addressing the issue. In addition to these in-depth results around specific issues, interviewees were asked generally for their perspectives on how government agencies can more meaningfully engage EJ communities, what science or research is needed to support EJ, and their

INTERVIEW RESULTS: AUGUST 2022

recommendations and thoughts on what actions they would like to see prioritized in governmental EJ efforts in the Delta.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY</b> .....	2
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	4
<b>METHODS &amp; APPROACH</b> .....	5
<b>Interview data collection</b> .....	5
<b>Analysis</b> .....	6
<b>Limitations and Gaps</b> .....	7
<b>RESULTS</b> .....	10
<b>Overview of EJ organizations interviewed and EJ communities represented</b> .....	10
<b>Overview of EJ Issues</b> .....	11
<b>ISSUE-SPECIFIC RESULTS:</b> .....	15
<b>Climate Change</b> .....	15
<b>Flood Risk</b> .....	17
<b>Water</b> .....	18
<b>Pollution Exposure and Public Health</b> .....	21
<b>Housing and Unhoused Communities</b> .....	23
<b>Food Security and Access</b> .....	25
<b>Indigenous and Tribal Justice</b> .....	25
<b>Recognition</b> .....	26
<b>Procedural</b> .....	27
<b>Distributive</b> .....	28
<b>Recreation and Outdoor Access</b> .....	29
<b>INTERVIEWEE-LEVEL RESULTS:</b> .....	31
<b>Approaches to working on issues:</b> .....	31
<b>Meaningful engagement:</b> .....	34
<b>Research and data needs</b> .....	36
<b>Greatest barriers to advancing EJ:</b> .....	37
<b>Interviewees’ suggested directions forward for EJ in the Delta:</b> .....	38
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	41
<b>Appendix A: Full list of organizations interviewed:</b> .....	41

**Appendix B: Interview Guide** ..... 41

## METHODS & APPROACH

### Interview data collection

A semi-structured interview guide was developed based on the driving questions of the Council’s EJ Issue Paper and a review of available EJ literature on the Delta. The interview guide provided interviewees a short background on the Council, the Delta Plan, and Delta Plan Five-Year Review, which motivated the development of an EJ Issue Paper. Following the introduction, the interview included nine multi-part, open-ended questions. These questions asked about the interviewee’s overall experiences working on EJ in the Delta; their perspectives on the most important EJ issues impacting the Delta, which communities were impacted and how; how environmental and social justice issues interrelate; how they work on EJ issues, mobilize community members and engage in policy processes; their ideas for what community engagement, scientific research or data collection, and policy actions are needed to improve on EJ issues in the Delta; how EJ organizations partner or collaborate together; and looking forward, what issues they would like to see the Council prioritize in their EJ work. The interview guide was reviewed and revised based on input from Council leadership, the Council’s EJ Expert Group and academic researchers with experience working on EJ in California. The final interview guide was reviewed and approved by University of California San Diego’s Institutional Review Board (Protocol #800911).

Interviews targeted representatives from organizations working on a wide array of EJ issues. An initial list of organizations along with the EJ issue(s) they work on, and their geographic scope was developed through web-based research and personal contacts. The initial list included nearly 80 unique organizations and was reviewed by the Council’s EJ Expert Group for additional organization names or individual contacts. From this list, organizations were identified as primary and secondary interview targets, following a purposive sampling approach that aimed to have representation of a wide array of known EJ issues and represent different geographic regions of the Delta (Table 1). All primary targets were invited to participate first; for issues where there was no success in contacting primary targets, secondary targets were then contacted for interviews. Snowball sampling was followed based on references interviewees provided at the end of their interviews. All interview invitations were sent by email or phone, with up to three follow-up attempts to non-respondents. All interviews were conducted virtually over Microsoft Teams or Zoom and lasted approximately one hour. A note-taker attended each interview to take detailed notes of the responses, but interviews were not recorded or transcribed verbatim in efforts to protect interviewees’ confidentiality. Interviewees were offered \$50 Visa gift cards as

tokens of appreciation for sharing their time and experiences, following best practices in compensating research participants.

## Analysis

Interviewees were assigned a random identification number which was associated with all response data, to further preserve confidentiality and anonymity in responses. Interviews were iteratively coded by three members of the research team following a codebook developed by the research team that worked to categorize and group similar EJ issues together into parent categories, and identify key themes around mobilization approaches, engagement, science/research, and policy needs. Coding qualitative interview data facilitates easier recognition and organization of consistent patterns across interviews. Intercoder reliability checks were conducted after every phase of coding or revision to the codebook, in order to ensure consistency across the three data coders.

Data were coded and analyzed at both the issue-specific and interviewee level. For example, if an interviewee discussed three issues (e.g., drinking water contamination, air pollution, and soil contamination) and referenced research and policy needs associated with each specific issues, these were coded and analyzed specific to the issue; if the interviewee also listed general community engagement needs (i.e., not tied to a specific issue), these were coded and analyzed generally at the interviewee-level.

For the issue specific coding and analysis, issue categories included in the codebook initially drew from a preliminary list of 34 EJ issues based on the Council's analysis of past public comments received related to EJ and was iteratively updated and revised throughout the coding process. Issues mentioned by interviewees that did not clearly fit into one of these 34 categories were tagged as 'OTHER' in the first round of coding. This group of issues was re-evaluated in a second and third round of coding to determine if they would fit into the issue categories if a broadened conception of issues was adopted, if there were enough mentions of a distinct issue to constitute an additional category be added, or if they were truly distinct, single or rarely mentioned issues and should remain classified in a broad 'other' category. Furthermore, issues that were identified as missing from the preliminary issue list were summarized and grouped where possible; sometimes these 'missing issues' could also be incorporated into a preliminary issue category if the conception of the issues was broadened, other times these missing issues remained distinct. All EJ issues discussed were also classified under one of the three tenets of EJ—recognitional justice, procedural justice, or distributive justice. All issue categories are reported in Table 3 below. Issue categories were then grouped through qualitative topical analysis into eight key areas of concern that captured the vast majority of issues that were discussed at length in interviews.

The following results present key trends and themes of the interviewee-level and issue-specific data.

**Table 1:** EJ issue areas targeted for interviews

Target EJ issue area	Number of interview invitations sent	Number of interviews completed	Response rate
General EJ	7	5	71%
Water	3	2	66%
Health and human services	5	0	0%
Jobs/ economy	2	1	50%
Food	1	0	0%
Education	1	0	0%
Housing & Unhoused communities	3	1	33%
LGBTQ+ Advocacy	1	0	0%
LatinX Advocacy	3	1	33%
Youth Advocacy	4	3	66%
Farmworkers	2	0	0%
Outdoor access	2	1	50%
Climate	6	0	0%
Public Health	3	1	33%
Disability	1	1	100%
Tribes & Indigenous groups	6	3	50%
Religious/ Faith Based	2	0	0%
Community/ neighborhood organizing	3	3	100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>40%</b>

## Limitations and Gaps

It is important to fully recognize the limitations and challenges of this work, in order to acknowledge resulting biases that influence which issues are discussed in depth, and how issues are characterized; as well as gaps in terms of issues that are not included in our research results.

**First, the Council's interview results do not represent all EJ issues or all EJ communities in or impacted by the Delta.** Interview sampling followed a purposive approach designed to reflect a variety and diversity of EJ issues relevant to the Delta. **We**

**do not assume that this purposive approach captured every EJ issue that exists**, and we are aware that some issues were covered in much greater depth and breadth (e.g., water issues, public health, and pollution) than others (e.g., food security issues, equal access to recreational opportunities, fires from climate change, unaffordable housing). The extent to which an issue is or is not covered in our interview approach should not be interpreted as a reflection of its overall importance in achieving a healthy and just environment for all communities. Furthermore, **although some interviewees who work statewide provided insights on EJ impacts in communities reliant on Delta exports**, we know that many **communities that are impacted by Delta management and policy decision-making outside of the Delta are not represented in the interview results**. These include, but are not limited to, communities in Southern California receiving Delta export water; Central Valley communities that experience a myriad of EJ challenges that result from industrial agriculture and development of the Central Valley that has expanded much in part due to access to Delta water; and the many Tribes that were forcibly removed from Delta lands and have been dispossessed from the use of Delta water or resources. Recognizing that the sample is not representative, we have worked to address major gaps by seeking guidance from the Council's EJ Expert Group, contacting additional Tribes, and hosting a public workshop.

**Second, we acknowledge the extreme hardship and pressure that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed on EJ organizations** which, by and large, are under-resourced and small-staffed organizations. These organizations have stepped in to provide significant amounts of support, aid, and connections to or distribution of resources to the EJ communities they serve, who have also been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. This research, conducted entirely during the pandemic, has been affected by challenges of reaching EJ organizations on the target interviews list and finding groups who were able to spend their limited time and energy being interviewed by Council staff. We received multiple emails from organizations invited to interview expressing support for the work, but stating they did not have time to participate. Moreover, our first attempt to begin interviews took place in December 2021-January 2022 and coincided with a new COVID variant and spike, which led to extremely low response rate during the first two months of interview invitations. We re-contacted the same groups in late February-April 2022, in attempts to reach them after the spike had subsided. Despite follow up and attempts to reach additional organizational contacts referred to us by interviewees, **we still were unable to successfully contact organizations working on specific target topics (e.g., see Table 1), including groups working on education or working from religious or faith-based perspectives or those working with LGBTQ+ communities or farmworkers**.

**Finally, because our analysis and interpretation of interview data categorized and organized EJ issues into different issue categories and over-arching topical areas, our**



**report of results may miss or generalize nuances or underemphasize the extent of interconnectivity between issues.** Multiple interviewees noted the importance of acknowledging and representing the connections and relationships between issues and discussed the challenge of labelling issues under discrete categories. Many interviewees also noted that it is important not to order some issues over others as higher priority or more important, as so many are interconnected and the precedence or severity of certain issues over others may be geographically and temporally specific. By combining both in-depth issue discussions on the eight key areas of concern and more general themes that emerged from results at the interviewee-level, we do our best to convey the interconnectedness between issues and provide a balanced picture that demonstrates both the breadth and depth of EJ work in the Delta, but we acknowledge that imperfections and gaps persist.

## RESULTS

### Overview of EJ organizations interviewed and EJ communities represented

A total of 22 interviews were conducted (two organizations had two representatives participate in their interviews, so a total of 24 individuals participated in interviews). Most interviews were conducted with EJ organization staff (n= 18); a few organizations provided referrals to community members active in their organizations, who were interviewed and spoke from their perspectives in the community or based on their participation or volunteer work with the EJ organization that provided their name (n= 4). Interviewees themselves represented perspectives from diverse ages, gender, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Organizations targeted for interviews included non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), Service Providers, and Tribal-serving organizations, working across a variety of issue areas (Table 1). While only two interviewees identified as explicitly “Delta Environmental Justice” groups working in the interior Delta, 17 out of the 22 interviewees were based and worked in the urban areas of the Delta’s Secondary Zone or just adjacent to the legal Delta boundary. Three interviewees worked statewide or predominantly at the state scale (Table 2).

Interviewees work with and serve a wide range of communities impacted by environmental and social justice issues. In the words of interviewees, these communities include: “disadvantaged communities or DACs” (7 interviewees), “low-income communities” (7), “Indigenous communities” and “Tribes” (3), “youth”, “at-risk youth” and “foster youth” (5), “minority communities” and “people of color” (4), “vulnerable communities” (3), “unhoused communities” (3), “immigrant communities” (3) including Hmong, Filipino, and Latino immigrants, “undocumented immigrants” (2), “renters” (2), “EJ communities” (2), “elders” and “seniors” (2), “people with disabilities” (2), “farmworkers” (2), “Legacy town residents” (2) and “food insecure communities” (1). Outside of describing which communities they work directly with, a large proportion of interviewees emphasized environmental impacts disproportionately impacting low-income communities of color or DACs (discussed by 13 interviewees), unhoused communities (12), and Tribe and Indigenous communities (10).

A full list of organizations interviewed is listed alphabetically in Appendix A.

**Table 2:** Primary<sup>1</sup> geographic focus or work areas of interviewees

Primary Geographic Region	Number of interviews
Sacramento	4
Stockton	6
Contra Costa County	4
Interior/ Rural Delta	2
Greater San Francisco Bay Area	3
Statewide	3

## Overview of EJ Issues

Across all 22 interviews, more than 280 issues were discussed. All interviewees mentioned multiple issues, with one interviewee naming 20 distinct issues; the depth of responses provided on each issue ranged significantly based on when and how the issue came up during the interview. For example, interviewees were asked to review and evaluate the preliminary EJ issue list based on the Council's public comment analysis and suggest if any issues were missing; on this question, interviewees often listed many issues they felt should be included on the list, but did not necessarily elaborate at length on each one. Interviewees were also asked to talk about which issues they work on and how those issues impact the communities they work with; for these issues, interviewees typically provided much more detailed responses. The following in-depth discussion of top issues focuses on the issues that were most commonly the emphasis of the interviewees' work, and thus where there was more detailed and elaborate issue-specific data.

The majority (n=245) of EJ issues brought up in interviews were given a primary classification into one of 34 issue categories on the preliminary issue list that were identified by the Council's EJ public comment analysis. Eight issues from the preliminary issue list were expanded during the coding and analysis process to include angles that interviewees felt were not explicitly included under the preliminary issue list category labels. Twenty-eight issues were identified as missing from the list, some of which were identified by multiple different interviewees; for example, air quality was identified as a missing issue by 10 interviewees. Furthermore, 14 issues were determined to be truly distinct from anything on the preliminary issues list and were discussed by only a single interviewee, thus these were added to the 'Other' issues category (see Table 3). All issue categories were also grouped into one of the three primary tenets of EJ- recognitional

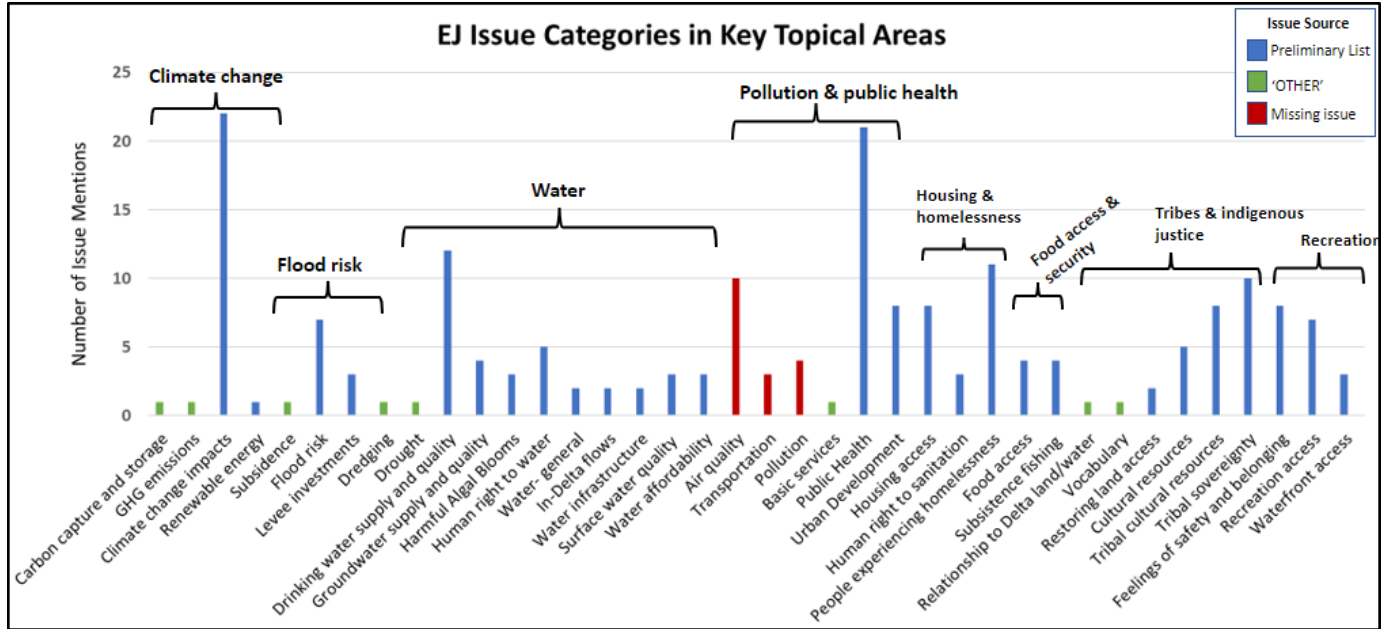
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<sup>1</sup> Some interviewees work at multiple scales or across multiple regions; they are classified into the region that they spoke most about in their interview. Interview data was not analyzed in a geographically explicit way, rather the primary motivation for evaluating geographic representation was to ensure that some coverage was achieved in each region of the Delta.

procedural or distributive- based on where they seemed to best fit, though issues often touch on multiple of these EJ principles. Finally, qualitative topical analysis was used to determine eight over-arching topical areas of concern, each of which included multiple issue categories, that captured the vast majority of issue content discussed at length in interviews (see Figure 1). **The eight primary issues areas are: climate change, flood risk, water, pollution and public health, housing and unhoused communities, food security and access, Tribal and indigenous justice, and recreational access.**

Despite best efforts to code, group and organize the issues interviewees spoke about, it is important to acknowledge how truly intersecting and interconnecting EJ issues and topics are. Multiple interviewees noted the importance of acknowledging and representing the connections and relationships between issues. To this end, the vast majority of issues interviewees discussed could be categorized many different ways and touch on recognitional, procedural and distributive justice principles. For example, nearly half of our interviewees spoke about EJ issues impacting unhoused communities in the Delta but from different angles, including disproportionate exposure to environmental risks (distributive justice), lack of effort to meaningfully involve and engage with these communities (procedural justice), and lack of recognition of these communities in climate disaster planning discussions (recognitional justice). As such, multiple issue categories that fall under all three EJ tenets speak to different angles and aspects of EJ issues touching on unhoused communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, meaningful involvement, human right to water and sanitation, air pollution, water quality, housing access), but each individual mention on these issues likely could have fit under multiple of these codes or multiple EJ tenets. The in-depth issue discussions on the eight key areas of concern attempt to demonstrate this interconnectedness. **However, a limitation of the overall analysis approach is the potential to overlook or understate the extent of interconnectivity between issues and the challenges inherent in assigning categories to complex, multifaceted issues.**

*“Everything is connected. When you change one thing, it will change another. We must use that intersection to build [broader] community with groups that are not explicitly focused on the issue at hand” (Interview ID7).*



**Figure 1:** Bar chart shows issue categories across the x-axis with number of mentions across interviews on the y-axis. Bars are colored to indicate how the issue was identified (blue =preliminary issue list, green = 'OTHER' issues, red= missing issues). Issues are grouped by the topical areas, with brackets indicating which issue categories are grouped into each of the eight primary issue topical areas.

**Table 3:** Compilation of all EJ issue categories used in coding and analysis. (First row) Issues identified initially through Council’s public comment analysis, including some with expanded definitions based on interviews. (Second row) Issues interviewees identified as missing from the initial list. (Third row) Issues identified through coding and data analysis process as distinct from other listed issues (coded ‘OTHER’).

Source	Recognitional Justice	Procedural Justice	Distributive Justice
<p>Preliminary list of EJ issues shown to interviewees, based on Council public comment analysis</p> <p>(text in parentheses shows how issue definitions were expanded based on interviews)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delta communities</li> <li>• Disadvantaged communities/ DACs (low-income)</li> <li>• Environmental justice communities</li> <li>• People experiencing homelessness</li> <li>• People with disabilities</li> <li>• Tribal sovereignty</li> <li>• Terminology</li> <li>• Vulnerable communities (Youth, elderly)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningful involvement</li> <li>• Language access (ASL and materials in alternate formats)</li> <li>• Meeting support (technological accessibility)</li> <li>• Transparency</li> <li>• Regulatory enforcement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate change impacts, (extreme events)</li> <li>• Cultural resources</li> <li>• Drinking water supply and quality</li> <li>• Feelings of safety and belonging</li> <li>• Flood risk (flood insurance, development in flood plains)</li> <li>• Food access (local and sustainable, food security)</li> <li>• Groundwater supply and quality</li> <li>• Harmful algal blooms</li> <li>• Housing access</li> <li>• Human right to water</li> <li>• Human right to sanitation</li> <li>• Job access (workforce &amp; career development)</li> <li>• Levee investments</li> <li>• Public health</li> <li>• Recreation (outdoor, greenspace) access</li> <li>• Subsistence fishing (and gardening)</li> <li>• Surface water quality</li> <li>• Tribal cultural resources</li> <li>• Urban development</li> <li>• Water affordability</li> <li>• Waterfront access</li> </ul>
<p>Issues “missing” from the preliminary EJ issue list,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmworker communities</li> <li>• Immigrant and undocumented communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centering residents/ community members’ voices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to traditional lands and tribal resources</li> <li>• Access to climate-controlled environment (heat, AC, air quality)</li> </ul>

<p>identified by interviewees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latino communities</li> <li>• Tribal resource management strategies</li> <li>• Tribal knowledge recognition &amp; legitimization</li> <li>• Unincorporated communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting access (time, location, compensation)</li> <li>• Racial equity &amp; justice</li> <li>• Racism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Air quality/ air pollution</li> <li>• Drought</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Pollution (water, air, toxics)</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Technology access: highspeed internet</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Urban heat island effect</li> <li>• Voluntary agreements</li> </ul>
<p>Issues identified as distinct from existing categories during coding and analysis process (coded 'OTHER')</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delta boundaries</li> <li>• District boundaries</li> <li>• Vocabulary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical context of EJ</li> <li>• Reparations</li> <li>• Prioritizing profit over people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access and affordability of basic services</li> <li>• Carbon capture and storage</li> <li>• Dredging</li> <li>• Relationship to land and water</li> <li>• Subsidence</li> <li>• Wildlife</li> </ul>

## ISSUE-SPECIFIC RESULTS:

For each of the eight key topical areas, in-depth qualitative analysis of interview data is provided. Within each issue, interview data are summarized to describe which communities are impacted and how, what EJ organizations are currently doing around this issue and their suggestion for how to make improvements on the issue.

### Climate Change

**Summary:** Fourteen out of 22 interviewees indicated climate change as a key EJ area of concern. Climate change is predominantly a distributive justice issue, with the impacts of long-term climate trends and extreme events disproportionately impacting the health, safety and well-being of some communities over others due to differences in proximity, vulnerability, and capacity to respond to climate risks. A few interviewees also referenced recognitional issues, stating that some communities are inadequately accounted for or included in climate change planning processes.

**EJ concerns around climate change:** According to interviewees, communities likely to experience higher *exposure* to climate threats include unhoused communities who have greater exposure to heat and wildfire smoke, low-income communities and renters who are less likely to have in-residence air conditioning and air filters, and agricultural workers conducting manual labor outdoors. Additional communities discussed as being more

*vulnerable* to climate disasters include: elderly, youth, and people with disabilities who can face more challenges in disaster evacuations, as well as low-income households, minority and immigrant communities who may not have access to other alternative places to stay during evacuations.

Interviewees discussed how long-term climate trends disproportionately burden some communities over others: for example, power shutoffs for fire prevention place higher burden on low-income communities; extreme heat impacts Delta urban areas (e.g. heat islands) to a greater degree; wildfire smoke exacerbates health risk in regions that already experience poor air quality and high heat (e.g., Central Valley and eastern Delta); increasing heat and more frequent smoke present greater hazards for unhoused communities and people who don't have cooling systems or air filters in their homes; and increasing sea level rise places greater flood risk on some communities. Interviewees also described disproportionate impacts of differential preparedness and response during extreme climate events such as floods, fires, and droughts (e.g., inadequate evacuation routes and resources on some Delta islands). Interviewees also discussed concerns around safety and local impacts of carbon capture and storage projects.

**EJ organizations' work on climate change:** Half of the interviewees working on climate change (n=7) spoke about working with local governments in various ways to improve disaster preparedness and climate planning, particularly to protect more vulnerable communities. This included reviewing disaster preparedness plans, providing emergency response trainings and emergency kits to residents, advocating for improved community mobility for elders and people with disabilities, identifying risks to utility service areas and investing in resiliency measures, incorporating anticipated sea level rise into local land use planning, and working with a coalition of CBOs to implement a Transformative Climate Communities grant. Multiple interviewees describe their biggest barrier to improving climate justice as political resistance to change: local land use planning processes neglect to consider anticipated climate impacts such as flooding due to sea level rise; local elected officials who think their constituents don't believe in climate change are unwilling to take action; and utilities are not implementing disaster preparedness models developed by CBOs for fear of wasting expenses or discomfort with how to work with certain populations.

**Suggested solutions to climate justice:** Interviewees advocated strongly for eliminating carbon emissions, investing in renewable energy sources, increasing adaptability in planning processes, accounting for anticipated climate impacts in local land use planning and communicating climate risks clearly to community members. Interviewees described needing more funding on climate resilience, employing community-engaged planning approaches, surveying communities about perceived climate risks and hazards, and monitoring the efficacy of climate resilience programs to ensure efforts are effective in



achieving desired change. Interviewees also advocated for more climate-controlled centers (e.g. cooling centers, smoke centers) to provide respite from extreme heat and hazardous air quality.

## **Flood Risk**

**Summary:** Nine out of 22 interviewees discussed flood risks as a key EJ issue. Related to climate change and sea level rise, interviewees concerned about flooding spoke about levee investments, flood insurance access and affordability and land use planning and development. Interviewees also expressed concern around subsidence in the Delta and dredging that can exacerbate flood risk. These are distributive justice issues concerning the safety of certain communities that experience disproportionate risk and/or inadequate resources to respond to floods.

**EJ concerns around floods:** Four interviewees discussed flood risk disproportionately impacting lower-income communities, as these communities are frequently located closer to levees, and interviewees believe that there are greater levee investments around higher value properties and higher-income communities. Flood insurance is expensive, often even unaffordable to low-income residents who live in a high flood risk zones. Furthermore, many communities are unaware of their flood risk or do not know how to navigate the process of seeking flood insurance. This is an even greater concern in communities where English is a second language. Three interviewees also expressed concern for local land-use planning processes that are allowing development in high flood risk areas or are not accounting for future sea level rise projections in planning and zoning. These interviewees described this dynamic as an “impending” EJ disaster, as those who move into high flood risk areas are likely to be the ones to face damages, clean-up costs, and/or experience displacement during future extreme events. Communities with higher numbers of elderly residents, residents with physical disabilities, or residents without personal vehicles are more vulnerable to flood risks because of mobility constraints that make evacuation challenging during extreme events.

*“We need more oversight where housing development is happening... [for example], development on Bethel Island presents big vulnerability to flooding. There's a one lane road in and out and lots of vulnerable folks... elderly, many without a personal vehicle. These are the same people who are going to flood and then face redevelopment or clean-up costs”.* (Interview ID46)

Interviewees discussed the intersection between flood risk and the housing crisis: *“the housing crisis intersects with flood risk because there's nowhere for people who live right next to levees to move”*(Interview ID36), explaining that residents in high flood risk zones often are unable to relocate even if they would like to, due to unaffordability of housing. Interviewees discussed particular concern for flood risk and community vulnerability in

Stockton, specifically South Stockton and Boggs Tract area, and in the Western Delta around Bethel Island, Hotchkiss Tract and the City of Oakley.

**EJ organizations' work on flood risk:** Interviewees discussed their efforts to work on public education and awareness campaigns to increase communities' understandings of their own flood risk. They also engage with local governments in land use planning processes to try to encourage climate-smart planning that considers expected sea level rise and prioritizes people's safety, advocating against building high flood risk zones. They argue that more state oversight is needed on housing development planning at the local level and levee investments need to be prioritized around low-income and other high-risk communities. They demand an answer to a pointed question: *"What is the long-term plan if these levees don't hold?"* (Interview ID48).

## Water

**Summary:** Fifteen out of 22 interviews indicated EJ concerns around water. These included concerns around water supply, which touched on water management decisions, water rights, Delta Conveyance and in-Delta flows, as well as water quality and water affordability. Interviewees largely focused on disproportionately *distributed* impacts, in terms of exposure to water contamination/pollution or lack of access to sufficient resources to ensure a reliable, clean and affordable water supply. However, a few interviewees also discussed *procedural* and *representational* water justice concerns related to involvement in water decision-making processes and which communities are legitimized as having a stake in water distribution decisions.

**EJ concerns around water:** EJ concerns around water are organized around water supply, water quality, and water affordability.

**Water Supply: water management, in-Delta flows, and Delta Conveyance** Many interviewees discussed concerns related to water supply and water management systems, indicating that certain communities—notably tribes and disadvantaged communities—are excluded from or not represented in water management decision-making. Interviewees expressed frustrations that current water management systems, including the water rights priority system, are corrupt and unequally distribute water access and benefits. Several interviewees noted that in-Delta freshwater flows are insufficient, causing and exacerbating a wide range of water quality issues. Two interviewees discussed drought-induced water supply concerns. One noted that drought-induced flow reductions and the water rights priority system compound to result in insufficient flows for in-Delta communities. The other discussed groundwater wells going dry due to over-pumping in the eastern Delta and Central Valley, impacting the water supply of South Stockton, farming and farmworker communities.

Multiple interviewees discussed concerns related to general water conveyance in the Delta and with the Delta Conveyance project specifically. Interviewees discussed concerns over impacts of the Delta Conveyance project on in-Delta water quality, stating that current water exports already "*send water away from the Delta, while communities in the Delta...[have] water barely above acceptable standards for drinking*" (Interview ID34). One interviewee expressed concern over the construction of the Delta Tunnel, worrying about contamination of soils from vertical tunnel excavation and associated impacts to water and endangered species. Multiple interviewees described communities that are being excluded or marginalized in the Delta Conveyance process, including tribes, rural residents, and Delta agricultural communities. As one interviewee stated, "*In the Delta, it feels that there is a push for these tunnels because the people in this agricultural community aren't 'savvy' enough to speak out. The State acts like they just don't hear anything from the Delta*" (Interview ID34).

***Water quality: contaminants & harmful algal blooms (HABs)*** Closely related to water supply concerns, many interviewees discussed water quality and water contamination issues that result from insufficient freshwater flows through the Delta, as well as inflowing pollution sources including agricultural fertilizers and industry contaminants. Interviewees describe reduced freshwater flows in the Delta as causing the decline in aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, increasing water hardness, concentrating contamination issues, and a key driver of harmful algal blooms (HABs). Three interviewees specifically discussed their concerns that HABs are getting bigger, lasting longer, and affecting areas many people visit. Associated impacts of HABs on surrounding communities include health concerns related to spending time in or near water with HABs and cyanotoxins aerosolizing and worsening local air quality. HABs and associated impacts were discussed as being most prevalent in Stockton waterways, but were also identified as an issue in the Western Delta, including Discovery Bay and other regions of Contra Costa County. South Stockton and the Western Delta, notably Bethel Island, were also identified as regions with poor groundwater quality, demonstrating the multiple water quality concerns concentrated in these areas.

Communities identified as most impacted by water quality concerns include South Stockton, especially minority communities that lack access to clean, safe waterfronts free from HABs, trash, and pollution from the Port of Stockton; Tribes, who tend to have higher exposure to water contamination due to cultural practices; and unhoused individuals who lack access to clean water for drinking, cooking, bathing and sanitation.

***Water affordability*** Multiple interviewees also mentioned water affordability as an EJ issue. One interviewee discussed water rates and rate structures in depth, sharing that many water ratepayers already cannot afford their monthly water bill, while current inflation and regulatory restrictions on varying water rate structures to different customers put additional pressure on ensuring affordable water. Several interviewees emphasized

that small and disadvantaged communities, including some Delta Legacy communities, often lack funds to address poor water quality concerns or secure access to a water system with adequate treatment. One interviewee noted that in Contra Costa County, disadvantaged communities living on the shoreline and those relying on small water systems or wells (such as communities on Bethel Island) are particularly affected by water quality issues because they lack funds to be able to adequately treat and supply their own water.

**EJ organizations' work on water:** Organizations engage with government at the federal, State, regional, and local scales on issues related to water supply and water quality. Several interviewees discussed engaging specifically in water conveyance efforts, including the Delta Conveyance project and water conveyance projects in Southern California, through direct action, policy process participation, and education/awareness building. For example, one Tribal organization discussed their attempts to engage with the Department of Water Resources, the State Water Resources Control Board, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the Council on the Delta Conveyance project and expressed frustration at the lack of appropriate response from these agencies. One organization discussed attending California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) forums on the intersections of homelessness and water issues in the Sacramento region. One organization discussed their implementation of a pilot project to connect Bethel Island's small water systems to a larger nearby water system. In doing so, they are addressing water quality concerns and working on rate affordability and equity with discounted water rates for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income communities. Other organizations discussed engaging in grant programs for water-related issues. For example, some interviewees provide public comments on water-related grant programs. One organization discussed their Proposition 1 work to assess water needs of communities in the San Joaquin River Funding Area, which encompasses most of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced and Madera Counties, as well as parts of Contra Costa and Sacramento County.

**Suggested solutions for water justice:** Interviewees suggested a multitude of policy actions and implementation approaches to address issues related to water supply and quality. Interviewees indicated that water infrastructure and filtration system improvements are needed to address water quality and contamination issues. To address waterfront pollution especially around South Stockton, one interviewee suggested having community events or government action clean-ups, as well as implementing laws or installing cameras to catch people littering in the water. One interviewee suggested that local and state agencies need to proactively work together to address human right to water issues, especially in small communities. One interviewee suggested that, as part of addressing human right to water issues, governments should test small-scale solutions at the local level and then scale those up, rather than the other way around. To address water contamination, interviewees noted that more assessment, education, technical assistance

and long-term solutions for communities are needed. For example, State notices of drinking water contamination should include more information on what the contamination actually means for communities impacted. One interviewee noted that the State often offers free drinking water to communities when water contamination is discovered, but this is not a long-term solution.

Several interviewees suggested that the Delta Conveyance project should not be built due to the adverse impacts on the Delta's water quality, ecosystems, and communities across the region. One interviewee emphasized that other options, such as water replenishment and potable reuse projects, are more viable and should be implemented first before making water exports out of the Delta easier.

Interviewees described the need for more and flexible funding to address water affordability, especially for disadvantaged communities. Interviewees also described the need for more research and data, including citizen science projects, on water contamination and water supply needs of communities, including better water quality monitoring and community-involved research to better understand waterways and connections with drinking and wastewater. One interviewee emphasized the importance of community engagement in research related to water supply needs, so that communities can identify their water supply needs and pass these needs on to appropriate agencies. One interviewee expressed the need for more research on the risks of agricultural and storm runoff, impacts to Delta water quality, and associated impacts to people. Two interviewees specifically noted the need for more routine data collection and research on HABs and impacts to human communities, especially near Stockton, Discovery Bay, and other areas where HABs are especially prevalent. These interviewees emphasized that more data is needed on HABs in order to demonstrate the need for action: *"You need to follow the science, but we need more science"*(Interview ID37).

## **Pollution Exposure and Public Health**

**Summary:** Nineteen of the 22 interviews indicated air quality, pollution, and/or public health to be a key EJ concern. These issues are primarily distributive justice issues, as they create health, safety and general well-being impacts for EJ communities due to their proximity to the source of pollution and lack of access to health services to address these health impacts. Lack of education on the health risks related to pollution, adequate pollution monitoring, and climate changes exacerbate health impacts and disparities.

### **EJ concerns related to air quality, pollution and other public health issues:**

Interviewees described disproportionate impacts of air, land, and water pollution on low income, minority, unhoused, indigenous, and the renter communities to include long-term respiratory impacts, the stress of unknown long-term impacts due to exposure to pollutants such as harmful algal blooms, as well as other health impacts from prolonged

exposure to contamination and environmental hazards. These impacts are compounded by the inability or difficulty for many of these communities to access public health services, public transportation, healthy food, and general services that contribute to a state of well-being. Specifically, undocumented immigrants and people with disabilities face challenges accessing adequate health services. Youth and elderly populations are often physically more vulnerable to impacts of air and water pollution. Interviewees attribute these disproportionate exposure patterns to land use decisions and redlining practices that placed these communities in closer proximity to industrial land uses, freeways and noise pollution, toxic waste, illegal dumping, and other pollutants of concern. For example, a high poverty region in South Sacramento sandwiched between three freeways and the executive airport is home to a large Latino and Asian population. High pollution, lack of air quality monitors and lack of green spaces or buffers leave the communities in this corridor disproportionately burdened, with very little access to environmental health information or health services. Similarly, South Stockton, a formally redlined region, currently houses predominantly black and brown communities who live with some of the worst air quality in the Central Valley due to the concentration of freeways, industry, trucking routes and the port on the south side of the city. These areas are sometimes the only option to find low-income housing. Furthermore, many of the job options available to these communities are industrial jobs that have a higher rate of exposure to pollution. Other factors that disproportionately impact these communities' public health, such as drug use, community racism, poor mental health, and COVID-19, compound the environmental health disparities. As an interviewee put it, *"everything in EJ is intersectional – affordable housing, vulnerable communities, public health, air pollution, inequity."* (Interview ID 37)

**EJ organizations' work on pollution and public health:** Interviewees shared examples of their education and awareness-building work on these issues, as well as several examples of collaboration with government agencies such as the CalEPA and the California Air Resources Board. This work entails building trust between community groups and agencies responsible for managing contamination and pollution and amplifying community voices. Interviewees shared that political dynamics, agency turnover, and racism in the public health system are some of the main barriers to making progress on contamination and pollution.

**Suggested solutions to pollution and public health:** Interviewees shared that there is a great need for regular and accurate air, water, and soil testing to control contamination and raise community awareness about the health risks when contamination is high. Additionally, interviewees shared the need for national surveys and more studies on the state of environmental hazards and for information on how thresholds are set for toxins. Interviewees want government agencies to take actions that prove to communities that their health matters, and to prioritize basic needs like public health and safety over other investments. Interviewees also expressed the need to pass laws that reduce point source

pollutants and limit the number of factories and industrial land uses in areas that already experience high pollution and contamination burdens. Because so many of the job opportunities in these areas come with high exposure to pollutants, interviewees shared a need for more investment in green jobs and a green workforce development, and community organization engagement in programs like Caltrans' Clean California. In terms of infrastructure and land use planning, interviewees expressed the need for improved water infrastructure and transportation corridors.

## **Housing and Unhoused Communities**

**Summary:** Of the 22 interviewees, 10 indicated affordable housing and being unhoused (i.e., homelessness) as a primary EJ concern. Both interviewees and the Council's EJ Expert Group have described the following communities (e.g., low-income, people of color, undocumented, Native Americans, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, and people transitioning out of foster care) being most affected by housing and unhoused issues. Also, many of these communities include people of all ages from youth to the elderly. Housing and unhoused community issues are both distributive and recognitional justice issues. Distributive impacts include health and safety concerns due to lack of affordable housing and shelters, which spills over into lack of sanitation resources, impacted water quality, and public health and safety concerns. Interviewees also discussed that unhoused communities feel underrepresented, a recognitional issue, in planning and policy processes. They feel misunderstood, especially in considering that many unhoused people are vulnerable in other ways as well, such as having physical or mental disabilities. For example, in discussing unhoused communities one interviewee said, *"people in disability communities need to be meaningfully reached out to participate in meetings"* (Interview ID29) with reasonable accommodations. Furthermore, these communities also feel that local governments are not being proactive around the housing crisis: *"Be fully engaged with homeless issues in general, step up and provide leadership"* (Interview ID4).

**EJ concerns around housing and unhoused communities:** Interviewees described several areas across the Delta with large, unhoused populations: cities of Vallejo, Stockton, Sacramento and Benicia, as well as more broadly across Contra Costa, Yolo, Solano, and Sacramento counties. In these areas, lack of shelters, and sanitation resources including bathrooms, places to bathe, and trash services create huge health hazards for those living unhoused in the region, as well as broader health and safety concerns for surrounding areas. For example, one interviewee shared that fewer than 20% of public restrooms surveyed in Sacramento City parks were open. With no place for people to use the restroom or open sanitation resources in parks, human waste ends up contaminating the same waterways that people use to bathe, cook and drink. Another interviewee shared that unhoused people are also often blamed for starting fires in the American River Parkway, which are built for warmth or cooking, but fuel nearby communities' concerns for air

quality and safety. Additionally, encampments near levees raise safety concerns because these highly vulnerable populations are in immediate flood risk zones; furthermore, the stability of levees and the ability to access and respond on levees during emergencies can be compromised. In addition to people experiencing homelessness, access to affordable housing is a challenge across the region.

Interviewees describe people not being able to afford housing, or not being able to afford water or electricity utility bills. Many end up without access to sanitation or refrigeration, needing to replace food more often. Communities most vulnerable to housing unaffordability or losing their homes entirely include low-income families, people of color, undocumented immigrants, indigenous people, elderly, children and people with disabilities. In fact, one interviewee cited their organization's research found that 76% of people experiencing housing instability or homelessness in the Delta reported having a disability and were living on a fixed income that was not enough to cover housing or other basic necessities.

**EJ organizations' work on housing and homelessness:** More than half of the interviewees working on housing and homelessness spoke about approaching the issue through education and awareness-building programs, capacity building, and coalition building with other organizations and the community. They discussed needing a space for all groups working on housing to come together, providing food at events, and using social media and monthly newsletters to get information out on direct actions regarding unhoused communities (e.g., homeless die-in). The City of Sacramento Mayor's Office and City Council developed a comprehensive homeless siting plan in 2021, but the plan didn't go anywhere and the community engagement fell apart. Interviewees stress that agencies need to reach out and make relationships with communities and nonprofit partners working on the ground, in order to develop and implement plans that work. One interviewee shared, *"One of the biggest pet peeves of my homeless friends are when agencies come out for ten minutes... make promises, and leave. It needs to be a consistent communication...with [groups] who can speak to what is happening there"*(Interview ID36).

**Suggested approaches to addressing housing and unhoused communities:**

Interviewees advocated strongly for government partnerships with CBOs and philanthropy on unhoused community issues and more proactive leadership from the local governments, such as providing year-round cooling and warming centers. Funding is another constant need. One interviewee suggested, for example, that the Council should support counties that have funding to address homelessness, directing those funds toward implementation and education (e.g., opening more restroom access, housing assistance programs, public education on the issues surrounding unhoused communities, or coordinate training programs for unhoused children and youth).



## Food Security and Access

**Summary:** Food security and food access were discussed as an issue of distributive justice in seven of 22 interviews. Most interviewees described the issue in terms of lack of access to healthy and nutritious foods, driven by three primary causes: inability to engage in subsistence activities, lack of transportation to access stores selling healthy foods, and concerns with the larger food system. Subsistence activities, including fishing, foraging, and gardening, are limited by lack of access to gathering/harvesting areas, requirements to purchase licenses for subsistence activities, and concerns about contamination in soils and waterways. One interviewee also noted the health risks to subsistence fishers who lack information about consuming fish sourced from polluted waters. Discussions about the larger food system included concerns about agricultural losses from water shortages leading to food shortages and possible food contamination caused by use of recycled fracking water for irrigation.

**EJ implications of food access:** Food access/food insecurity was discussed as an issue affecting Indigenous communities, low-income communities, and urban Delta communities, specifically Hmong communities in certain Sacramento neighborhoods, black communities, and people in transitional housing services in Vallejo. Lack of food access and food insecurity lead to poor nutrition (from lack of food or reliance on unhealthy purchased foods) and related health impacts.

**EJ organizations' work on food access:** One interviewee discussed their work addressing urban food insecurity in conjunction with housing insecurity by supporting community gardens for people in transitional housing.

**Suggested solutions to working on food access:** One interviewee discussed the need for small-scale projects and working with stakeholders to make Delta agriculture sustainable. This interviewee felt both science and local knowledge are needed to understand how things actually work.

## Indigenous and Tribal Justice

**Summary:** Indigenous EJ issues were discussed in six out of our 22 interviews. Interviewees discussed issues that touch on recognitional, procedural, and distributive injustices, but these three categories are tightly interwoven. In broad strokes, Indigenous peoples are displaced from their ancestral lands in the Delta and across California and thereby restricted from practicing their cultures. Failure to provide for meaningful consultation or other forms of engagement (procedural) also represents a failure to honor and uphold Tribal sovereignty (recognition). This paired procedural-recognitional injustice perpetuates distributive injustices created by development and other environmentally damaging landscape modifications, which cause debilitating physical and psychological health/wellbeing impacts to Indigenous communities (distributive). Two interviews

represented primarily Tribal perspectives, with discussions highlighting issues as they affect both federally and non-federally recognized Tribes in the Delta and around the state. Other interviewees spoke about issues affecting Native Americans both in and outside the formal Tribal context, the latter including urban (Sacramento) Native Americans, and Native American Delta residents who are not members of Delta-regional Tribes. These four interviewees' organizations also serve non-Indigenous communities.

For purposes of analysis, Indigenous EJ issues are grouped into the following interrelated types: recognition (Tribal sovereignty and preservation, Traditional Knowledge); procedural (marginalization and exclusion, consultation); distributive (environmental hazards, water system).

### *Recognition*

Tribal sovereignty and preservation: This issue is about the violation of Tribal sovereignty and associated threats to Tribal preservation. Tribes have rights as sovereign nations, including the right to harvest, to teach, and to put down prayers – and exercising these rights is essential to Tribal preservation. Tribal rights are being actively impinged upon by environmental (e.g., flood risk, climate change) and social (e.g., Delta Conveyance Project, development) changes that impact the land, which is the basis for Tribal cultures. Recreational access also conflicts with Tribal sovereignty and preservation when recreational activities are prioritized over Tribal cultural uses. Often recreational uses (e.g., ATVs, boats in rivers) have environmentally damaging effects that also preclude Tribes from exercising their sovereign rights.

Traditional Knowledge: Closely intertwined with Tribal sovereignty and preservation is the repression of Tribal/Indigenous cultural beliefs, practices, and knowledge (referred to here as Traditional Knowledge). Sources of this injustice include lack of access to land/waterfronts for stewardship, subsistence, and cultural practice – both due to colonial displacement and present-day unaffordability of land; repression of language and associated loss of cultural/place-based knowledge; lack of understanding of Tribal cultural practices (e.g., burning) fostering public resistance; and the risk of commercial appropriation (e.g., plant species harvested for health food stores) when culturally significant areas become publicly known. These result in reduced physical health and well-being for Indigenous communities, and have negative fallout effects for the broader regional community. For example, among the benefits of Indigenous burning is control of fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes, whereas ongoing repression of Indigenous burning necessitates use of chemical pesticides. Two interviews explicitly linked repression of Traditional Knowledge to implications for Tribal sovereignty and preservation. One interviewee discussed how agency representatives often do not understand the sacredness of the entire “creation area” – as is evidenced by jurisdictional boundaries that do not include the full watershed – and lack of recognition for (in the interviewee's words) “all our

relations,” (animals, plants, land, air, water) as community members. To the extent that agencies do not recognize or respect this knowledge, they fail to honor Tribal sovereignty and undermine Tribal preservation. In another interview, repression of Indigenous knowledge about the interrelated risks of various toxins (on humans, other animals, food, etc.) was described as an extension of cultural genocide. In addition, several interviewees discussed lack of access to Tribal cultural resources, which is an issue of both recognitional and distributive injustice.

### *Procedural*

Marginalization and exclusion: Tribal nations/Indigenous communities are marginalized and excluded in ways that inhibit their engagement in policy processes. Two interviews explicitly identified that Indigenous people face discrimination, including both individual and institutional racism and systemic oppression. This manifests, for example, in the failure to recognize Tribal experts who do not have settler-endorsed credentials (e.g., PhD). In addition, two interviews highlighted exclusion as a recognitional/procedural issue for specific communities: 1) non-federally recognized Tribes, who are not included in formal consultation and whose sovereign rights are not respected; 2) Native American people who live in the Delta but are not members of Delta-regional Tribes, who do not feel welcome or valued in engagement processes. As explained by one interviewee, *“We have an audience of nearly 700 Tribal members that aren’t necessarily part of a Delta Tribe (urban-native) and many have felt that their opinion hasn’t been valued, so don’t want to get involved”* (Interview ID11).

Consultation: Closely related to marginalization is lack of meaningful or “good faith” consultation with Tribes. In one interview this was traced to the history of broken promises starting with unratified treaties in the 1800s and the subsequent murder of Native American people, which established a precedent of unfulfilled commitments and non-enforcement of regulatory requirements to uphold Tribal rights. Interviewees shared that Tribal engagement is often sought too late for meaningful input. In the words of one interviewee, *“This has become agencies telling the Tribes what they intend to do, but not providing opportunity for ‘free and prior informed consent’ to the action”* (Interview ID3). Consultations can also be adversarial, with agency representatives showing disrespect for or distrust of Tribal representatives. At times Tribal words are misreported or misconstrued. One interviewee commented that agencies often send biologists or archaeologists who lack understanding of Tribal rights or procedural requirements to consultations. Another interviewee observed there is broad disregard ignorance of and at times disregard for Tribal law, as well as Federal Indian law, among agency staff and the general public. In addition, because agency staff sent to consultations are often not high ranking in their organizations, Tribal input provided through consultation is frequently ignored by decision-makers. Consultation was identified as a critical entry point for Tribes but also one that has been weaponized against them when used perfunctorily as a “box-

checking” exercise, rather than an ongoing process to meaningfully address Tribal concerns and needs.

### *Distributive*

Environmental hazards: Interviewees discussed a variety of environmental hazards facing Indigenous communities, including exposure through ceremonial use of water; construction-related soil contamination; and chemical contamination from sprayed fire retardants. In addition to negative health impacts, these hazards also impinge on Tribal sovereignty and preservation. One interviewee whose organization focuses on urban Native Americans and others underserved communities in Sacramento listed a myriad of exposures, including soil/water contamination, wildfire smoke and other air pollutants, heat exposure (urban heat islands, lack of shade trees), and noise pollution. These health hazards are exacerbated by community racism/redlining and amplified by climate change.

Water system: One interview highlighted commodification of water as an injustice linked to corruption. Rather than being treated as a life-supporting necessity for humans and ecosystems, or a member of Indigenous community and part of Indigenous peoples’ spirituality, water is treated as a resource and sold for wealth generation: *“A day will come when water is the highest cost commodity. Those who can afford it will, and those who can’t, will get substandard water to drink”* (Interview ID32). This is, again, a recognitional injustice, but also a distributive one in that ultimately communities will suffer when they cannot afford clean drinking water.

**Approaches to working on indigenous EJ issues:** Both organizations that focus on Tribal/Indigenous issues work by raising awareness and education efforts and working through public processes. One discussed capacity-building as part of the organization’s approach. Additionally, one interviewee described coordinating or conducting environmental impact assessments to inform Tribal/Indigenous groups’ consultation engagements. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of building relationships across Tribes or EJ organizations, as these networks can be used to provide mutual support. Several interviewees mobilize community members in-person (e.g., tabling events, face-to-face interactions), and emphasized the importance of meeting Tribal/Indigenous communities where they are.

Interviewees mostly discussed procedural barriers to their work on Indigenous EJ issues. For one interviewee the procedural issues themselves (marginalization and exclusion, lack of meaningful consultation) are also barriers, along with threats of violence, agency staff turnover, and agencies pitting Tribes/rancherias against one other. Two interviewees converged in expressing the frustration that change is very slow, especially for governments: *“It’s critical to be patient - some of our work has taken 15 years to get 25% complete”* (Interview ID3).

**Suggested solutions for Indigenous EJ issues:** Interviewees generally endorsed communication with Tribes, especially through early, sustained, and meaningful consultation that is responsive to Tribal input. Other specific suggested solutions include agency efforts to build trust with and engage Tribes (e.g., email more than one Tribal contact for consultation); and funding to educate agencies about Tribes/Tribal laws and vice versa. One interviewee highlighted the Indian Beneficial Use [called Tribal Beneficial Use by Water Boards] designation as an opportunity to protect culturally significant spaces and uphold Tribal sovereignty. Key resource needs are funding and personnel/capacity – and, specifically, personnel who are open-minded. Noting a preference to work with EJ staff, even over Tribal liaisons, one interviewee also identified a need for EJ people higher in organizations. Interviewees identified science needs related to toxins (plant uptake, how objectives for toxins are set) and soil (soil DNA and impacts on communities). One interviewee felt there is value in interweaving Traditional Knowledge with Western science, but also emphasized the need for trustworthy scientists who will not override Tribal interests.

## **Recreation and Outdoor Access**

**Summary:** Fourteen of the 22 interviews indicated recreation and/or outdoor access as a key EJ concern. Access in this context is an entirely distributive justice issue as EJ populations tend to have less access to outdoor spaces to recreate. This limited and lack of access has detrimental impacts on the mental and physical health of these communities.

**EJ concerns for lack of recreation and/or outdoor access:** Interviewees described several communities that are likely to experience limited or a complete lack of access to green and open spaces for recreation. These include minority and low-income communities that live in urban areas and may not have the information or resources, such as a vehicle or equipment needed, to access outdoor spaces. Entrance and parking fees at some parks can be a significant deterrent as well. Some interviewees shared that sometimes community members don't feel welcome in some outdoor recreation areas. Interviewees named South Sacramento, South Stockton, areas of Vallejo, legacy communities in the Delta, the Sycamore area in Antioch, and small towns in the western Delta as specifically lacking access to green and outdoor spaces. As an interview noted, *"Sacramento has always prided itself as the City of Trees, but that's not for everyone. It's not in all areas... This leads to more heat impacts in areas with less trees.. We need to change the mindset of the City to expand the canopy into Latino neighborhoods as well."* (Interview ID40) Additional communities mentioned included: at-risk youth, unhoused, and legacy communities in the Delta.

Impacted communities experience physical and mental health impacts from the lack of and inequitably distributed green and open space, and a general lack of relationship with the land in their surrounding area. Interviewees also noted that a lack of green space in these

neighborhoods contributes to lower air quality and associated health impacts as well as higher air temperatures.

**EJ organization's approaches to improving outdoor and/or recreation access:**

Interviewees spoke primarily to efforts around education and awareness building. This includes working with community groups to familiarize them with nearby places that are available to recreate and how to get there, as well as using grant funding to cover entrance fees or assist in transportation costs to reach recreation areas. Both actions help overcome barriers to enjoying outdoor areas, waterfronts, parks, and open space. Interviewees advocated for organizations working in this space to get creative with how information can be more useful to communities. For organizations working directly with communities, interviewees shared that it would be helpful to have data on which communities have the least outdoor/recreation access so that they could focus their efforts and resources in those areas.

## **INTERVIEWEE-LEVEL RESULTS:**

In addition to the in-depth results around key topical issue areas, interviewees provided significant insight into broad EJ needs that stretch across distinct issues. Interviewees were asked about their approaches to engaging and working on EJ issues, including what levels of government and what policy venues they engage on and how they mobilize their communities to get involved. The interviews also probed EJ advocates to hear what meaningful engagement looks like and how they recommend government agencies engage with communities. Interviewees were asked if and how science, research or data collection could support their work or draw attention to EJ concerns. Finally, interviewees were asked about the largest barriers they perceive to achieving EJ and their recommendations on what issues the Council should prioritize in their forthcoming EJ work. For each of these topics, data were summarized using qualitative topical analysis approaches to determine key themes across all interviewees.

### **Approaches to working on issues:**

Interviewees described engaging on EJ issues using a variety of strategies (see Figure 2). The most common engagement strategies involved efforts to educate and build awareness of EJ issues and environmental harms among impacted community members. Organizations worked to connect with community members on these issues in ways that were relevant and salient to them and to build capacity within the community to empower individuals to engage, participate, tell their stories, and voice their needs in effective ways. One organization described this focus well:

*"Meet people where they are. Address immediate issues [first], before people can care about bigger picture/longer term issues. Bring together people that have trusted relationships with residents and trained organizers" (Interview ID15).*



**Figure 2:** Frequently employed strategies EJ organization interviewees use to engage on EJ issues.

EJ organizations also spend significant amounts of time participating in public policy processes and advocating on behalf of EJ communities. Interviewees mentioned engaging with 29 different agencies across all levels of government: 4 federal agencies, 13 California state agencies, 12 local government agencies and districts, as well as interfacing directly with elected members in the State Assembly and Senate (See Table 4). Interviewees provided varying levels of detail on which specific policy processes or programs they engage with and what their experiences were like with these agencies, which are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Summary of agencies interviewees mentioned engaging with through various policy processes and their general experiences with those agencies (positive, neutral or negative), if it could be discerned based on their responses. This list may not be comprehensive of all agencies that interviewees engaged.

Level of government	Government entities engaged on EJ issues (Number of mentions in interviews)	Specific office/ process/ issue engaged	General experience (positive/ neutral/ negative and why?)
Federal	EPA (3)	Carbon capture and sequestration	N/A
	Bureau of Reclamation (1)	N/A	N/A
	Center for Disease Control (1)	Grant funding	Positive – flexible & understanding



INTERVIEW RESULTS: AUGUST 2022

	National Endowment for the Arts (1)	N/A	N/A
<b>State</b>	Environmental Protection Agency (1)	Grant funding; Develop EJ Tours; Develop understanding of EJ issues	Positive- educational
	Office of Emergency Services (1)	Disaster preparedness plans	N/A
	Strategic Growth Council (2)	Grant funding (Transformative Climate Communities)	Positive (2)
	Air Resources Board (2)	Grant funding for air quality community monitoring; AB 617 implementation	Positive (1) Negative (1) - Air quality district boundaries exclude communities who need monitoring
	State & Regional Water Resources Control Board (1)	Partnered on grant application; Delta Conveyance project; Harmful algal blooms (HABs)	N/A
	Department of Water Resources (3)	Delta Conveyance project	Negative (3) – excluded and marginalized from processes; feedback not heard
	Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (1)	N/A	N/A
	State Parks (2)	Access and preservation of traditional and medicinal plants; Grant funding for urban greening/ recreation corridor in Sacramento	Negative (1) - relationship with staff ended  Positive (1)
	Department of Conservation (1)	N/A	Positive
	Department of Public Health (1)	Office of Health Equity	N/A
	San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (1)	Adapting to Rising Tides	N/A
	Delta Protection Commission (2)	National Heritage Area	Positive (1) - NHA has brought diverse group together; Neutral (1)

	Delta Stewardship Council (1)	Delta Adapts	Positive (1) - did not feel silenced
	State Assembly & Senate members (1)	N/A	Positive – felt heard
<b>Local: cities, counties and special act districts</b>	Contra Costa County: Board of Supervisors, Water District (1)	Safe Return Project	Positive
	Solano County: Department of Public Health, Office of Education (1)	Mental health services for unhoused population	Neutral (2) - unsure how much they listen
	San Joaquin County (1)	N/A	N/A
	Sacramento County (1)	Disaster response planning	N/A
	City of Sacramento (Mayor's Office & City Council) (1)	Homelessness Siting Plan	Negative (1) - nothing happened with comprehensive plan
	City of Antioch (Mayor's Office and City Council) (1)	Police Reform; Waterfront Project; Sycamore Project	N/A
	City of Stockton (3)	Transformative Climate Communities; Urban forestry/ urban greening; Historic preservation	Negative (1) - lack of support for EJ efforts Positive (2)
	City of Vallejo (2)	Vacant lots/ toxic waste dumping; Police reform	Negative (1)- confusing/ hard to follow process Positive (1) - good relationship
	City of Richmond	Safe Return Project	N/A
Water districts (3)	Expanding service areas	Neutral (2) - EJ not as much of a priority as it should be Negative (1)	

### Meaningful engagement:

Interviewees provided their perspectives on how community engagement processes can be led in meaningful, inclusive and effective ways. Key themes around engagement included:

- Relationship and trust-building must come first
- Work through trusted community partners that are embedded in the community
- Engagement must be intentional, justice-oriented and anti-colonial
- Make it easy to participate
- Follow through

**Relationship and trust building:** Interviewees explained that EJ communities have a long history of being disenfranchised by government, so trust must be rebuilt. Repeat

interactions and establishing relationships demonstrates commitment and is important to encouraging participation and building buy-in to engagement processes. Interviews were adamant about agency staff coming out to communities to meet people in their spaces, on their terms, and experiencing their events and ways of life. They suggested taking tours of communities to hear issues from their perspectives and hosting or attending smaller group meetings to allow for “true dialogue”. Actually reaching people requires significant effort. Interviewees suggested door-to-door canvassing or tabling at community events or in community spaces has the best chance of reaching the folks are not going to show up to a public meeting or otherwise engage.

***Work through trusted community partners:*** The majority of interviewees said a key to engaging effectively is working with and through trusted community organizations who are embedded in the community and know how to reach people there. Each community is different, and it is important to tailor outreach to meet the unique needs and conditions of the community, which local partners will help to ensure. As one interviewee described: “*We aren’t learning about a community; we are from the community. When we recruit and do outreach, we understand who they are and they understand who we are*”(Interview ID11). Furthermore, multiple interviewees noted the need for agency staff to be able to talk about EJ issues in ways that resonate with the community (rather than jargon and technical language); one interviewee suggested working with local artists is a way to communicate through more approachable means (Interview ID40).

***Be intentional, justice-oriented outreach & anti-colonial:*** Interviewees stressed the need for engagement efforts to “*focus on empowering the voices of those who have been silenced*”(Interview ID2). This requires getting involved in different communities, not only with those who frequently show up and engage. It requires intentional effort to connect with communities who are nearly always left out of environmental planning and policy conversations, including unhoused populations, farmworkers and Tribes. Interviewees discussed the need for more engagement to focus on listening and hearing the concerns and ideas community members hold for how to go about fixing the problem, rather than starting by presenting the agencies’ ideas, as exemplified in this quote: “*Avoid ‘talking at them’ rather than talking to and with them. Don’t repeat colonizing behavior*”(Interview ID1).

***Make it easy to participate:*** Nearly all interviewees emphasize the importance of removing barriers to participation. Tangible suggestions included providing compensation for people’s time; ensuring language access and language support are available for meetings and important documents or information that communities should be aware of (e.g., contamination concerns or health risks); continuing to support hybrid meetings and also hosting meetings in-person in Delta communities; and being respectful of people’s time by giving them enough time to review materials or proposals (i.e., longer public

comment periods) and not requiring them to sit through hours-long public meetings to be able to provide a two minute comment on a single agenda item. Interviewees discussed the need to provide clarity and specific instructions on how to engage on different issues, including what agencies to engage with, what processes are relevant, and what opportunities there are to voice opinions and concerns (e.g., commenting on draft public documents, providing oral public comments, participating in a workshop or interview). Multiple interviews said improved coordination across agencies is needed so that communities are not receiving duplicative asks and requests for input need to be understandable to non-technical, diverse audiences (across ages, education level, background knowledge), so jargon and ‘agency speak’ needs to be removed.

***Follow through:*** Finally, interviewees stressed the absolute importance of being clear, honest and transparent on how input will be used. Recommendations included not holding back or *“be[ing] afraid to have tough conversations... whether the community wants to hear it or not, don’t hide it”* (Interview ID36). Moreover, moving engagement beyond a “box-checking” exercise was a consistent recommendation: *“There’s so many agencies that want to help, but it’s a lot of lip service or they just disappear. You can only have so many meetings before you think, when is something tangible actually going to happen?”* (Interview ID36). Interviewees wanted to see their communities and their own ideas and solutions being put into action—solutions that prioritize the most disadvantaged and most vulnerable communities first.

## **Research and data needs**

Interviewees were asked how science, research, environmental monitoring or other data collection could serve their work or the communities they work with. Responses ranged from identifying research gaps or new research questions, to expressing need for more data collection and environmental monitoring in specific underserved or over-burdened communities, to better communication and outreach to ensure scientific information reaches and is accessible to the communities who need it most. These science needs are grouped and organized under over-arching headers to the best extent possible, but a core theme emphasized across nearly all needs is to involve communities or community partners to design these science activities to ensure their relevancy to addressing specific needs. Science needs identified included:

- **EJ-oriented approaches to research**
  - Community-based research
  - Citizen and community science
  - Integration of western science and traditional knowledge
- **Topical research gaps**
  - Environmental contaminants: pathways of exposure, risk of cumulative exposure, health impacts

- Delta tunnel impacts on communities' well-being: impacts on traffic, contaminants, pollution exposure, road/ infrastructure damage, accidents, safety
- Carbon capture and storage: who is impacted, what are infrastructure impacts
- Understand stakeholder attitudes about the Delta
- Public health impacts and disparities of environmental risks
- Evaluate efficacy of climate implementation programs (e.g., TCC grant)
- Assess how communities learn about and their literacy on environmental risks
- **Environmental monitoring/ data collection**
  - Focus monitoring on communities with least access/ most burden
  - Expand monitoring stations in areas with highest pollution
- **Increasing scientific resource accessibility and improving science communication**
  - Central data hub that is easy to navigate and for community members to use
  - Online interactive maps showing EJ problems & what areas are impacted
  - Communicate what toxicity levels are and what they mean
  - Visual communication tools that show risk and solutions so communities know what they can do
  - Translated data to simplified, easy-to-understand versions
  - Climate risk communication tools

### **Greatest barriers to advancing EJ:**

Areas that emerged as key barriers to advancing EJ across interviewees included limited resources among EJ organizations, with nearly every interviewee describing funding being a limiting factor to their work. Interviewees continued to discuss challenges with engagement processes, saying engagement is often more of a box-checking exercise than something that leads to actual changes in decisions. EJ parties are also often left out of processes, and when they are included, it is often due to the relationships they have built with individual staff members at agencies that don't carry forward if the staff turnover; as one interviewee described: *"if the few people I communicate with eventually leave, that relationship could be gone"* (Interview ID29). If a positive change is made, interviewees feel they have to continue to guard and preserve that change: *"[Tribes] have to do a lot of watch-dogging to ensure changes stick"* (Interview ID3). Multiple interviewees discussed a suite of barriers associated with agencies not truly understanding what EJ means. Interviewees explained oftentimes agencies assume EJ to only be about people of color, but that it's important to understand other dimensions on which communities are privileged or disproportionately burdened by the environment (e.g., low-income and unhoused communities). Agencies often lack an accurate understanding and acknowledgement of Tribal government and

Tribal law, and don't involve EJ staff in Tribal consultation and engagement. Finally, interviewees described systemic racism and resistance to change as key barriers to making progress. Interviewees explain that agencies are uncomfortable with change, think it will be expensive and don't know how to work with the populations that need more support. Sometimes interviews see racism acknowledged in EJ discussions, but it doesn't lead to institutional change. Dynamics of marginalization, exclusion, lack of consultation and threats of violence persist.

### **Interviewees' suggested directions forward for EJ in the Delta:**

Interviewees were asked throughout the interview their ideas for actions or approaches to address or improve upon EJ issues, as well as what actions they would like to see the Council prioritize in their EJ work. Some interviewees provided action ideas and recommendations that may not be within the scope of the Council's authority, but these ideas were compiled nonetheless as valuable insights into regional EJ needs and solutions. Ideas and recommendations were grouped under key topical areas and themes, which are organized from broader to more specific ideas.

- **Be race forward**
  - Have conversations on racism
  - Hire people of color
  - Put people of color in leadership roles
  - Establish an Office of Racial Equity
  - Reparations
  - Ensure people of color are in the room when decisions are made
- **Be bold on EJ**
  - Hire EJ staff at higher levels of management within agencies
  - Engage fully on EJ issues and be a "*champion to push for change from within the system*" (Interview ID15)
- **Prioritize human health**
  - Communicate what health risks are associated with different Delta management issues
  - Focus on who is most often and first impacted, often black and brown communities
  - Focus on public health and safety before recreation
  - Build access to sanitation
- **Spend time to meaningfully engage communities**
  - Show up in EJ communities, specifically Stockton, Sacramento, Discovery Bay, Antioch, Oakley, Hood
  - Partner with community-based groups
  - Value lived expertise

- *"Do a better job getting message out about who the Delta Stewardship Council is and what you do so community can participate"* (Interview ID15)
- Create educational opportunities for people to learn about the Delta
- Help communities navigate between agencies to know where to go with their issues
- Get existing information out to people in ways they can understand, rather than focusing on creating new information
- **Recognize and engage with Tribes**
  - Talk with tribes early in process
  - Understand why Tribes distrust government, but work to re-build trust
  - Invest in education programs for agencies to understand Tribes and Tribes to understand Delta governance
  - Involve tribal managers and experts in Delta issues through "co-management"
  - Incorporate Indian Beneficial Uses into water regulatory processes
- **Use influence with local governments and other state agencies to advocate for EJ communities**
  - Cooperate across agencies to achieve outcomes on the ground
  - Engage in local land use planning processes
  - Work to educate local governments and local elected officials on environmental policy options that do not result in adverse economic impacts
  - Push cities to use COVID relief money to help residents catch up with rent, utility or water bills
  - Limit industrial development/ point-source emitters in local region
  - Engage on homelessness issues with local governments
- **Invest in the community and next generation**
  - Bring Delta communities into careers in policy, science, engineering
  - Build school partnerships to teach about importance of Delta & learn about environmental harms
  - Invest in opportunities to develop youth in sustainability fields
  - Workforce/ job training
- **Delta-specific projects and issues**
  - Don't build Delta tunnel(s)
  - Update and invest in infrastructure (levees and water systems), particularly for over-burdened communities
  - Improve access to waterfront
  - Reduce barriers to outdoor access, like fees
  - Encourage community connections to estuary
  - Build educational programs and literacy around water quality, affordability and supply and flood risk

## INTERVIEW RESULTS: AUGUST 2022

- Improve agricultural practices to reduce runoff
- Create a visitor center with the Delta National Heritage Area that is educational
- Improve transportation corridors
- Improve air quality



## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Full list of organizations interviewed:

- Antioch Mobility Labs
- California Indian Environmental Alliance
- California Indian Water Commission
- Common Ground
- Conway Homes Residents Council
- Diablo Water District
- Ensuring Opportunity
- Environmental Justice Coalition for Water
- Hood Community Council
- Latino Outdoors
- Little Manilla Rising
- Public Health Advocates
- Reinvent South Stockton Youth Advisory Council
- Resources for Independent Living
- Restore the Delta
- Sacramento Native American Health Center
- Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness
- Sierra Club- San Francisco Bay-Delta Regional Group
- Third City Coalition
- United Latinos Sacramento
- Vallejo Project

### Appendix B: Interview Guide

#### Introductory Talking Points

- **Introductions**
  - [The interviewer and notetaker should introduce themselves.]
  - The interview will take about one hour. First, I will share a quick overview of the Council and the interview process, and then we will go to the questions. Feel free to stop me at any point if you have questions for us.
- **Overview of the Council and EJ Issue Paper**
  - The Delta Stewardship Council is a state agency that was created in 2009 by the State legislature. The State legislature directed the Council to develop a long-range resource management plan for the Delta, known as the Delta Plan.
  - While the Council does not fund or build infrastructure or restoration projects, it is responsible for ensuring that projects in the Delta are

consistent with the Delta Plan. Some examples of these projects are: land use changes, transportation and infrastructure projects, levee improvements, water diversions, and habitat restoration.

- The Council also coordinates with stakeholders to set priorities for scientific research and monitoring in the Delta, and it does fund scientific research efforts through the Delta Science Program.
- The Council has a 7-member appointed board of Councilmembers and about 60 staff. The Council holds monthly public meetings. The Councilmembers are the agency's decision-makers, who provide direction to staff and respond to staff recommendations.
- In 2019, the Council reviewed the Delta Plan and recommended that staff prepare an issue paper to investigate strategies or responses within the Delta Plan to address environmental justice.
- CA State Law defines environmental justice to mean: "The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies (Gov. Code, § 65040.12, subd. (e))." We acknowledge that this legal definition of EJ draws from, but is not as fully encompassing as the Principles of Environmental Justice that were drafted at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, and we recognize that in practice environmental justice can mean different things to different people. For the purposes of our interview today, when we use the term "environmental justice" or "EJ" we are considering the definition of EJ defined under CA law.
- The purpose of this interview is to understand different communities' experiences with EJ in the Delta, and the ways that the organizations working in those communities **would like for state agencies, including, but not limited to the Council, to address EJ**. Interview responses will be used to develop the issue paper.
- **Overview of the Interview Process**
  - The interview consists of 9 multi-part questions and will take approximately one hour. Some of the questions have multiple parts. If a particular question makes you uncomfortable or you do not wish to answer, you can skip it.
  - [Name of notetaker] will be taking notes on your responses. We will not associate your name or the name of your organization with your responses; in other words, the notes will be anonymous. However, it is important to know that anonymous interview notes, including any specific quotes may be released as public records, if the specific topic being discussed are subjects of a Public Records Act request.

- The Council frequently receives Public Records Act requests, especially related to regulated projects. One of the most common Public Records Act requests we receive is for records related to the Delta Tunnels or Delta Conveyance project. If your answers touch on the Delta Tunnels, it is very likely we will have to release the notes from this interview. You are welcome to talk about it if you would like, but we want you to be aware of the potential outcome.
- Do you have any questions before we move into the interview questions?

### **Interview Questions**

1. What are your community's/ organization's experiences with environmental justice in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta? **[for organizational staff/ reps, the community of focus here is the community the organization works with, not their own personal community if that is distinct]**
2. **[Screen share list of EJ Issues from past comments]**. These are environmental justice issues identified by people and organizations who have provided public comments on past projects undertaken by the Council.
  - a. Do you see any important EJ issues missing from this list?
  - b. In your view, which issues are the *most* important or urgent?
  - c. Tell us a little about how **[named issue(s) in 2b]** impacts your community, and what communities you focus your work in. **[if they named many issues as most important, limit this discussion to 1-2]**
  - d. **[Intersectional view]** How do you see these issues interacting with one another, or with other social and environmental issues?
3. **[Experience with EJ issues- who is experiencing/ impacted by EJ issues & how are they working on the issues]** Can you please tell us about your organization's work on EJ issues?
  - a. What are your approaches to working on these issues? How do you mobilize community members?
  - b. What issues have you seen most and least success on? What support/ resources do you need to advance your work on these issues?
  - c. Have you engaged with other local/state/federal agencies on these EJ issues?
    - i. **[If yes]** Who specifically have you engaged with? What was your experience like?
  - d. Have you ever engaged in Delta issues or Delta policy processes (federal, state or local levels)?
    - i. **[If yes]** Who specifically have you engaged with? What was your experience like?
    - ii. **[If no]** Why not? What barriers have you experienced?

4. How would you like to see [name priority issue(s) from Question #2b] in the Delta managed or addressed?
  - a. We are interested in hearing your ideas about addressing and managing these issues, even if the Council does not have direct influence over some of these issues. One goal of this issue paper is to share the relevant information we hear with other agencies or entities who do have direct influence over some of these issues. What role would you like to see the government take on managing or addressing these issues?
5. How would you like to see EJ communities engaged with government in the Delta?
  - a. [if more detail needed] What would meaningful community engagement look like?
6. How could science, research, monitoring, or other data collection better serve your organization's work on addressing EJ issues like [name priority issue(s) from Question #2b]?
7. [EJ Networks] We would like to learn more about organizations working on EJ and how EJ orgs and CBOs partner to work together.
  - a. [if EJ org representative]
    - i. What other EJ organizations or CBOs do you collaborate or coordinate with on these issues and how do you work together? [e.g. collaboration may include information sharing, joint participation in a policy venue, shared issue focus, joint projects/ advocacy efforts/ funding, etc.]
  - b. [if Community member]
    - i. Are you a part of any EJ organizations or community-based organizations working on these issues?
    - ii. Where do you get information on these issues?
8. Based on our conversation today, what is one thing you would like the Council to prioritize?
9. Are you interested in receiving email updates about this initiative, or a notification when the draft issue paper is released? Would you like us to contact you about other Council projects?
  - a. [If answer to Question #6 is a good fit for Delta Science for Communities Workshop (formerly DDF)] We have a program coming up that might be able to address the data need you mentioned earlier, if you are interested. May I put you in touch with my colleague Cory to discuss it further?
10. Could you recommend any colleagues, collaborators or partners at other organizations that we could reach out to interview as well? Or, would you be willing to share our invitation to your networks over email? We've had better success having the invitation shared from our other interviewees. [please get name and contact information if possible]

### **Wrap-Up**

- Thank you so much for making time today to share your insights with us.
- When we have compiled results from all interviews and have draft written products available, we will send you draft version to provide you an opportunity to review, ensure any of your responses have been accurately represented, and provide instructions on how to provide any feedback.
- We are compensating all interview participants for their time in the form of a \$50 Visa gift card. Would you prefer your gift card be sent by mail or electronically? [If electronically] Please provide your full name and email address to send the gift card to in the chat. [If by mail] Please provide your full name and mailing address to send the physical gift card to in the chat.