



Environmental Justice Committee Minutes

March 14th, 2023, 6:00 – 7:30 PM CT

Virtual Meeting | [Meeting Recording](#)

Attendees

Matt Posner	PPBEP
Haley Gancel	PPBEP
Molly McDaniel	PPBEP
Casey Fulford	AACD
Kyle Buck	EPA
Rev. Dr. Calvin Avant	Unity in the Family Ministry
Ryan Kirby	Escambia County

1. Call to Order

2. Welcome and Introductions

3. Approval of November 1st, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Ryan Kirby (Escambia County) made a motion to approve the November 1st, 2022, Meeting Minutes. Kyle Buck (EPA) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Chair / Co-Chair Nominations and Elections

Matt Posner (Director, PPBEP) highlighted some of the key roles and responsibilities of the committee leadership positions. He reported that nominations for Ryan Kirby and Kyle Buck had been sent in prior to the meeting and asked participants for any additional chair and co-chair nominations. Hearing none, M. Posner suggested that R. Kirby and K. Buck serve as Co-Chairs for the Committee.

Casey Fulford (AACD) made a motion to elect Ryan Kirby and Kyle Buck as Co-Chairs of the Environmental Justice Committee for 2023. R. Kirby seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Staff Updates

- 1. Community Resilience Survey Update** (*Molly McDaniel, Community Resilience Intern*)
M. McDaniel provided an overview and update of the Resilience Readiness Project. The project includes collaboration with the City of Pensacola and other stakeholders to assess city residents' perceptions of sea level rise and other local risks associated with climate change through the administration of an online survey. The survey period ended on December 31st, 2022, and the survey received 184 total responses. The survey results will be used to inform community-based resilience action through the development and implementation of a pilot resilience project. The update



highlighted the outreach efforts used to reach residents and a review of preliminary survey results. For a closer look at the survey results please see the [One Drive Link](#).

- A discussion of potential pilot projects followed, and committee members provided feedback on the concepts and project as a whole.
- Calvin Avant (Unity in the Family Ministry) expressed concern that this survey did not reach the EJ communities in the city and therefore does not reflect their concerns or needs.

M. McDaniel clarified that this project predates the formation of the EJ Committee and the survey itself was developed to assess broader community resilience throughout the City of Pensacola, not just the status of EJ communities in the city. M. Posner followed up with a question regarding advice on how to expand PPBEP's reach into these communities for future efforts. C. Avant recommended focusing on community centers, churches, and Latino and Black Media to ensure that this information is reaching the communities.

- Staff were advised that projects that increase access to information and distribution of educational materials where they are needed will likely be more impactful to communities from both EJ and resilience perspectives. C. Avant mentioned that his organization collects and distributes materials from Escambia County's Emergency Management Office to community members each year and is looking to develop an app that community organizers can use to communicate with residents in the event of a disaster.

6. Discussion

1. **Draft Environmental Justice Strategy Feedback** (*Matt Posner, Director and Molly McDaniel, Community Resilience Intern*)

Staff presented a set of draft objectives for PPBEP's EJ strategy to the Committee for feedback. The draft objectives are: (1) To understand and address how the overburdened communities relate to and use the estuary and its resources, (2) To understand and address barriers to equitable and safe access to the estuary and its resources, (3) To understand and address barriers to participation in PPBEP events, resources, and decision making, and (4) Enhance public understanding of watershed-wide environmental justice concerns. These objectives are meant to serve as a reference for what PPBEP and the EJ Committee wants to accomplish over the next 5-10 years.

Objectives 1-3 are concerned with first, gathering more information about the issues EJ communities are facing and second, developing actions that will begin addressing those issues. Objective 4 is concerned with using PPBEP's platform to elevate the watershed's EJ concerns and increase awareness of these issues. This strategy is also meant to provide a means for PPBEP to enhance, elevate, and supplement ongoing efforts by other individuals and community organizations working in the EJ space and should not result in the duplication of efforts.



- Committee members provided feedback and recommendations to staff on the phrasing used and the structure of the document to eliminate exclusionary language and create a more logical flow. Acknowledging that this strategy applies to the PPBEP's entire watershed, the term 'Estuary' will be removed from Objectives 1-3 to reflect that broader scope. Changing 'estuary' to 'watershed' both becomes more inclusive and highlights that no matter where the individual is located in the watershed, their use/access to resources has an impact on the broader system.
- Questions were raised about how the information about these communities would be gathered and used. C. Avant recommended utilizing a model similar to that of community participatory research through which the data that is collected is then made available to the communities being studied for their use.
- It was also suggested that an additional objective focused on identifying specific EJ communities and networks would be the logical first step to better understand and address the issues in these communities since these concerns are often location specific and spatially clustered. K. Buck agreed to produce a map identifying these EJ communities.
- A brief conversation about long term targets and accomplishments concluded this portion of the discussion.
- Staff will work with the Committee Co-Chairs to further refine the structure and language of the draft Strategy to bring back before the Committee at the next meeting.

7. **Around the Room Updates**

Staff and committee members had a brief discussion on current funding opportunities.

- [Gulf of Mexico Environmental Justice Grants Program Request for Applications](#)
- [The Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program](#)
- Additional Opportunities: [Environmental Justice Grants, Funding, and Technical Assistance](#)

8. **2023 Meetings & Events**

1. May 4th: Management Conference
2. June 6th: Environmental Justice Committee
3. August 29th: Environmental Justice Committee
4. November 14th: Environmental Justice Committee

9. **Next Meeting**

- a. June 6, 2023: 6:00 – 7:30 pm