



DRAFT

Environmental Justice

Implementation Plan



**Bureau of
Safety and
Environmental
Enforcement**



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A Commitment to Environmental Justice: Unveiling BSEE's Environmental Justice Implementation Plan

A message from Kathryn E. Kovacs, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management, U.S. Department of the Interior and Paul Huang, Deputy Director, BSEE

The unveiling of our Environmental Justice Implementation Plan marks a defining moment for the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. This initiative is a bold step forward, not only in meeting our regulatory responsibilities but in redefining our engagement with the communities that depend on and are impacted by our work.

Our approach goes beyond compliance; it is a commitment to actively shaping a just and inclusive future.

We, as leaders, are committed to embedding the principles of environmental justice into every layer of BSEE's operations. This means ensuring that equity and inclusivity are not just ideals but practical realities guiding our daily decisions and strategies.



Kathryn E. Kovacs
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, U.S. Department of the Interior



Paul Huang
Deputy Director, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement

Vision for Action

- **Engagement:** We are setting new standards for how we engage with all stakeholders, particularly those from historically marginalized communities. We aim to transform our interactions into partnerships that are built on trust, respect, and mutual understanding.
- **Innovation:** We will harness innovative strategies that challenge conventional approaches, ensuring that our solutions are not only effective but also equitable. This involves thinking creatively about how we can use our resources and influence to foster environmental stewardship.
- **Collaboration:** Our success in implementing this plan will depend on our ability to collaborate--not just within BSEE but across agencies and sectors. We are committed to building partnerships that amplify our impact, fostering connections that bring diverse perspectives into our decision-making, and engaging in collaborations that drive meaningful progress.

Our Environmental Justice Implementation Plan outlines strategic goals that will enable us to achieve these visions. It is designed to ensure that every community has a voice in our processes and that our actions reflect a deep commitment to justice and equity. Through this plan, we aim to reduce the environmental and health burdens on communities while enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of our regulatory practices.

As we move forward, we do so with a clear focus on the future—a future where BSEE is not only a leader in safety and environmental enforcement but also a champion of justice and equity in every aspect of our mission.

Thank you for your commitment to this transformative journey. Together, we will make a meaningful difference in the lives of the communities we serve and set a new benchmark for what it means to be a responsive and responsible regulator.

BSEE'S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GOALS

Institutionalize Environmental Justice

Cultivate environmental justice competency and incorporate environmental justice considerations into bureau actions.

Deliver Equity through Investments

Advance equitable access to federal procurement opportunities, resources, and other qualitative benefits.

Reduce Burdens and Harms

Enhance compliance and enforcement actions to reduce impacts on communities with environmental justice concerns.

Advance Meaningful Outreach and Engagement

Foster opportunities for communities to participate as informed partners in bureau actions that are important to their wellbeing.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BSEE works to promote safety, protect the environment, and conserve resources offshore through vigorous regulatory oversight and enforcement. Since its establishment in 2011, BSEE has been the lead federal agency charged with improving safety and ensuring environmental protection related to offshore energy and marine minerals activities on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf.

Our year-round work schedule includes conducting thousands of announced and unannounced inspections, developing safer technologies, mandating that each operator establish and follow their Safety and Environmental Management System, and carrying out investigations when serious incidents do occur.

We believe that safety, environmental stewardship, and resource conservation are linked attributes. Therefore, we address each of these three areas with equal vigor to drive the offshore energy industry to take their responsibilities as seriously as we take ours.

This document establishes BSEE's first-ever Environmental Justice Implementation Plan. It will serve as a roadmap over the next four years for how BSEE will advance environmental justice within our mission authority. Guided by existing orders, policies, and U.S. Department of the Interior priorities, BSEE has developed specific objectives and actions that can support our four environmental justice goals.

These goals were built in collaboration with bureau program office leadership and staff, and informed by input from other federal partners, Tribal Nations, members of the Native Hawaiian Community, and communities with environmental justice concerns.



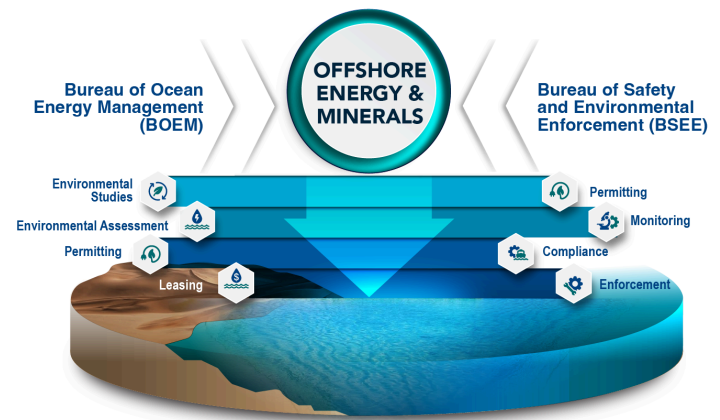
BSEE defines environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Our use of the term “community” throughout this document is intended to characterize those with shared or common exposures, risks, and interest in BSEE’s decision-making and activities affecting human health and the environment.

BSEE’s environmental justice goals, objectives, and actions will aid all populations potentially affected by offshore energy and mineral activities. However, BSEE has committed to emphasizing meaningful involvement with the communities suffering from environmental injustices the most, so that all may enjoy the same degree of protection from environmental and health risks and possess equal access to the benefits of environmental resources and the decision-making processes that impact their communities.

BSEE’s environmental justice efforts support the Department of the Interior’s priorities for a coordinated and unified whole-of-government approach to identifying and preventing environmental injustices and ensuring that communities do not suffer from disproportionate adverse human health and environmental impacts from the agency actions.

BSEE’s mission to promote safety, protect the environment, and conserve resources offshore through vigorous regulatory oversight and enforcement is fundamentally aligned with these environmental justice principals. Further, the bureau recognizes protecting human health and the environment as inherent to the pursuit of accomplishing its strategic goals and objectives.

BSEE’s 2023-2026 Strategic Plan includes a strategic objective to engage people, communities, and organizations with environmental justice concerns to help mitigate adverse impacts to communities experiencing environmental inequities.



BSEE is employing strategies to ensure the bureau:

- Is knowledgeable about the past and potential impacts experienced by communities with environmental justice concerns stemming from activities on the Outer Continental Shelf;
- Possesses the capacity to regularly engage with communities and monitor and respond to environmental justice concerns; and
- Meaningfully considers environmental justice implications in bureau decisions and enforces compliance measures designed to mitigate adverse impacts.

In September 2023, the BSEE Director instructed the bureau to elevate environmental justice immediately by increasing consideration of environmental justice in our bureau’s decisions, program implementation, and regional execution, and to increase meaningful engagement with communities with environmental justice concerns that are potentially affected by BSEE’s actions.

To this end, BSEE has been working internally to dedicate resources towards embedding environmental justice into our bureau activities. BSEE has engaged offices and internal staff by asking them to make decisions about environmental justice actions that their offices can lead or participate in and to identify the actions that they believe would be most impactful in bringing BSEE closer to achieving the bureau's environmental justice goals.

BSEE is committed to serving as a leader in environmental justice efforts, showcasing how embedding environmental justice into the enforcement and regulation of offshore energy and mineral activities can contribute to the Department of the Interior's environmental justice vision to provide outstanding management of the natural and cultural resources entrusted to us in a manner that is sustainable, equitable, accessible, and inclusive of all populations.

Examples of BSEE's Environmental Justice Vision



Data and Transparency

BSEE recently completed a multi-year effort to enhance our enforcement options to reduce harm to coastal communities (e.g., air quality and water quality).

- A BSEE working group read ten years' worth of notices for environmental compliance violations that were previously grouped into one general category.
- They examined the details of the violations and drafted criteria for 45 new checklist items BSEE environmental compliance scientists and engineers are now using to promote safety and environmental stewardship on the Outer Continental Shelf.

Reducing Risk

To address legacy pollution, BSEE has awarded two contracts for decommissioning of nine orphaned wells in the Matagorda Island area in federal waters approximately 12 miles off the Texas coast.

These contracts reflect BSEE's duty to ensure that infrastructure used in exploration, development, and production activities is properly decommissioned, providing for the long-term protection of offshore resources and the environment.



GOAL 1

Institutionalize Environmental Justice



Goal #1: Institutionalize Environmental Justice

Cultivate bureau environmental justice competency and incorporate environmental justice considerations into bureau actions.

Objective 1.1: Increase BSEE's knowledge about past and potential impacts experienced by environmental justice communities from activities on the Outer Continental Shelf.

- Develop a framework for a multi-faceted bureau environmental justice training program that addresses the origins of environmental justice, current policies, why environmental justice is important to BSEE, the link between offshore activities and onshore effects to communities, and skills for meaningfully engaging with communities. (e.g., training opportunities may include webinars and workshops).
- Develop strategic partnerships with communities and other governmental and non-governmental organizations to assist bureau training and development.

Objective 1.2: Improve leadership support of environmental justice policies.

- Issue a new bureau directive that acknowledges historic lack of emphasis of environmental justice and requires leadership to support staff with time and resources to help implement BSEE's Environmental Justice Implementation Plan and other related environmental justice initiatives.
- Incorporate departmental and bureau environmental justice performance benchmarks into leadership's annual performance plans.

Objective 1.3: Create an organizational culture where environmental justice is a fundamental consideration in bureau actions and decisions.

- Develop guidance that assists programs with addressing community impacts in critical decisions and enforcement actions.
- Develop internal policies for the consideration of environmental justice issues in the planning and implementation of research initiatives and in the use of research findings and conclusions.



GOAL 2

Deliver Equity Through
Investments

Goal #2: Deliver Equity Through Investments

Advance equitable access to federal procurement opportunities, resources, and other qualitative benefits.

Objective 2.1: Leverage knowledge, resources, and capacities of other agencies and bureaus to create enhanced opportunities for environmental justice communities.

- Engage with other ocean-based agencies to learn how they implement environmental justice and identify opportunities for interagency collaboration.
- Strengthen the interagency partnership with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to ensure BSEE is using the best available research and impact analysis to help direct investments, such as procurements and partnerships, to communities with the greatest, most relevant inequities.

Objective 2.2: Collaborate with communities and community-based organizations to learn from their experiences and practices and to help them develop new knowledge and skills.

- Hold or participate in forums with community partners to learn about grassroots initiatives and the tools and resources that would assist communities with accessing a just energy future.
- Enhance outreach and training to small and disadvantaged business vendors on potential contract opportunities by dedicating additional support staff and subject matter experts.

Objective 2.3: Increase equitable opportunities through bureau recruitment, hiring, and retention.

- Create an outreach tool that notifies communities and community-based organizations of advertised jobs, internships, contracts, and other employment opportunities.
- Embed social science and cultural competency skillsets into leadership and decision maker positions.
- Establish environmental justice liaisons in hiring and procurement offices to support equity-building investments and initiatives in BSEE's recruitment, hiring, and retention activities.

GOAL 3

Reduce Burdens and Harms



Goal #3: Reduce Burdens and Harms

Enhance compliance and enforcement actions to reduce adverse impacts on communities with environmental justice concerns.

Objective 3.1: Increase community awareness of BSEE's mission, authorities, and activities that address adverse impacts to human health, safety, and the coastal and marine environment as well as BSEE's role in compliance and enforcement activities.

- Release an updated and interactive environmental justice webpage that uses plain language, provides accessible content, and shares information that communities are interested in.
- Provide transparent information on compliance monitoring findings, incident investigations, and enforcement actions on the BSEE website.
- Assess the needs and requirements for providing translations of critical information or content on www.bsee.gov into languages spoken by communities most impacted and relevant to offshore energy and mineral activities.
- Create a community toolkit with a step-by-step guide for building community capacity to effectively engage in BSEE decisions that may impact local environmental health and quality of life. The community toolkit will include an overview of BSEE planning and operations, potential benefits and impacts of offshore energy and mineral operations, successful community engagement strategies, and links to additional resources, in an accessible format and in more than one language.

Objective 3.2: Improve BSEE's ability to meaningfully consider environmental justice implications in the bureau's decision making.

- Assess the potential benefits and activities for a Federal Advisory Committee that focuses on creating shared terminology, understanding impacts – including those outside of BSEE's jurisdiction, discussing mitigation measure effectiveness, and prioritizing bureau research.
- Identify opportunities to incorporate environmental justice risks and internal controls in planned evaluations, with particular emphasis on critical decisions and enforcement actions.
- Evaluate and remove exemptions, variances, or waivers to our regulations and standards that may undermine the achievement of human health or environmental standards.



GOAL 4

Advance Meaningful
Outreach and Engagement

Goal #4: Advance Meaningful Outreach and Engagement

Foster opportunities for communities to participate as informed partners in bureau actions that are important to their wellbeing.

Objective 4.1: Facilitate understanding of environmental justice communities and how they may be affected by BSEE activities.

- Facilitate a study that identifies the most vulnerable and relevant environmental justice communities impacted by energy and mineral activities on the Outer Continental Shelf and the impacts from BSEE-authorized activities affecting them.
- Attend or support community-led events (e.g., Coastal Cultures Conference) and tours in communities for bureau staff to learn about community perspectives, priorities, and challenges.
- Develop an annual engagement plan in collaboration with communities that reflects what information communities want to receive from BSEE, how they would like to receive it, and how often.

Objective 4.2: Strengthen BSEE's capacity to regularly engage with environmental justice communities.

- Establish regional and headquarters offices environmental justice liaisons that can support community relationship building.
- Establish a system for tracking community engagement, following up on issues or questions, and regularly engaging with communities.
- Issue a bureau directive with guidance on how to compensate community members and nongovernmental partners who host community tours, train BSEE employees, or provide information to BSEE.
- Develop a new budget initiative that can support long-term bureau capacity for building community relationships through continuous communications and interactions.

METHODOLOGY AND MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

BSEE started the process of developing this Environmental Justice Implementation Plan in December 2022. We focused on ensuring the plan incorporated community feedback, supported the Department of the Interior's Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, complemented Bureau of Ocean Energy Management policies, and incorporated actions pursuable under bureau legal authorities.

In February 2023, BSEE held a series of meetings with senior leadership and staff representing BEE's national programs and regions to discuss the project and solicit feedback on the preliminary set of environmental justice strategic goals. Program offices and regional staff were asked to provide input on goal intention and wording.

In October 2023, November 2023, and February 2024, BSEE met with federally recognized Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act Corporations, and members of the Native Hawaiian Community to get feedback on the preliminary goals identified internally while they were still in the early development phase.

The Office of the Director identified four preliminary strategic goals following a review of over 150 environmental justice strategic goals, objectives, measures, policies, and priorities from other organizations, academic institutions, and state and federal agencies, including these four principal documents:

- [Departmental Manual, 525 DM 1](#)
- [Department of the Interior Environmental Justice Strategic Plan](#)
- [White House Environmental Justice Scorecards](#)
- [Department of the Interior 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

This feedback informed the development of objectives and actions to support BEE's environmental justice strategic goals. During these discussions, representatives from Tribal Nations provided perspectives on what capacity building could address within BSEE's regulatory authority and through partnering with other federal agencies. There was also discussion about the complementary missions of BOEM and BSEE, aligning environmental justice actions between the bureaus, and about clearly identifying communities and impacts to those communities during up front analysis so that BSEE's compliance and enforcement activities benefits can be tracked and improved.

The development of this BSEE Environmental Justice Implementation Plan itself is in no way intended to redefine, replace, or undermine our obligation to engage with Tribes as distinct and sovereign nations. Instead, we aim to complement our obligation to Tribal Nations by recognizing that our effort to achieve and preserve environmental justice through our federal actions requires deliberate engagement with and inclusion of Tribes.

We recognize that Tribal Nations will have different preferences about whether they want to be named a community with environmental justice concerns or not, and which activities they want to engage in. With the support of our National Tribal Engagement Program, BSEE will continue to uphold its trust responsibility with Tribal Nations, including through Government-to-Government consultation, and to advance the inherent sovereign rights and authorities of Tribal Nations.

During our discussions with members of the Native Hawaiian Community, we heard perspectives around developing shared understanding of topics like environmental justice, enforcement, technical assistance, and research, and recognizing and incorporating the Hawaiian worldview, not just the Western worldview. We also discussed how engagement should be founded on the pillars of La'a, Ma'a, and Pa'a. We learned that La'a means to treat people, places, and resources with dignity and respect; Ma'a means to be accustomed to or familiar with something – surroundings, environment, people; Pa' a means to be steadfast, secure, firm, unshakeable, solid rock foundation.

We also discussed how Native Hawaiian practices are meant to benefit "the source." It's not a resource, it is the source of their land, food, and people. We were reminded that elders have knowledge over time, and they may be able to recommend alternatives that make a project or BSEE-authorized activity successful.

The development of this BSEE Environmental Justice Implementation Plan is in no way intended to redefine, replace, or undermine our obligation to engage with the sovereign Native Hawaiian Community. We aim to complement our obligation to the Native Hawaiian Community by recognizing that our effort to achieve and preserve environmental justice through our federal actions requires deliberate engagement with and inclusion of the Native Hawaiian Community.

We recognize that Native Hawaiians will have different preferences about whether they want to be named as communities with environmental justice concerns or not, and which activities they want to engage in. With the support of our National Tribal Engagement Program, BSEE will continue to uphold its special political and trust relationship with the Native Hawaiian Community, including through government-to-sovereign consultation.



The first voyage of traditional Hawaiian voyaging canoe Makali'i and crew sailing alongside Mokumanana in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in 2019. Photo: Ka'aleleo Wong, <https://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Specific recommendations from these meetings are shown below:

Tribal Nations October 2023 and December

- Fund Tribal initiatives and compensate Tribes for participating in federal government activities.
- Any benefits conveyed to Tribes should have low administrative, reporting, and application requirements.
- Provide free food during engagement events.
- Increase training and awareness of disadvantaged businesses and impacts on cultural resources.
- Provide a monthly email newsletter.
- Work on building capacity in communities with environmental justice concerns.
- Meaningful participation from communities will require providing resources to Tribes.

Alaska Native and ANCSA Corporations October 2023

- Partner and trusted organizations with existing connections to Native Alaskans that can act as a liaison to advance meaningful engagements, learning opportunities, and early awareness.
- Consider engaging with the following organizations for the best outreach: Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Alaskan Institute for Justice, Alaska Federation of Natives, and Zender Environmental.
- Participate in some of the larger statewide environmental conferences (e.g., Alaska Federation of Natives, Alaska Regional Tribal Providers Conference, or Indian General Assistance Forum).

Native Hawaiian Community November 2023 and February 2024

- Conduct future engagements on bureau activities in person as much as possible and have a presence in Hawai'i.
- Provide information on any government "takings" as much as possible.
- Set the standard for involving the Hawaiian community in federal actions and decision making.
- Prioritize engagements that mirror Native Hawaiian cultural values (e.g., involving community elders in decision-making and using language that reflects Hawaiian community alliance).
- Assess regulatory complexities (e.g., gaps and overlaps) affecting environmental stewardship efforts in Hawaiian communities.



From November 2023 through June 2024, BSEE held three internal workshops, where objectives and actions were co-developed by BSEE staff. These workshops were designed to enable BSEE staff to self-identify program gaps and needs and to ideate actions and solutions to address them. Learnings from these workshops are highlighted below.

Internal Workshop #1 November 2023

- This first workshop offered the opportunity for offices to identify the goals that they felt were most in line with the duties of their office. They were then asked to brainstorm objectives for each goal. Staff were asked to think of goals as long-term and objectives as being short-term changes that could be made to lead us to the successful execution of the long-term goal.
- This workshop highlighted the need to develop shared understanding and foundational definitions of environmental justice within BSEE.

Internal Workshop #2 February 2024

- In the second workshop, staff were asked to identify actions to support the objectives developed in the first workshop.
- Staff were then asked to hypothesize possible barriers and what resources would enable BSEE to execute the objectives and actions.
- This workshop focused on introducing staff to the changes in thinking (i.e., adaptive versus technical solutions) and strategies that would be required to implement these solutions.

Internal Workshop #3 June 2024

- The third workshop took place over two days where participants were asked to provide direct feedback on actions created from the first two workshops, and action provided by participants in the March 2024 BOEM/BSEE Dialogue with community members.
- Staff considered what actions their office could contribute to, and what actions could be most impactful for BSEE to focus on in the near term.

In March and October 2024, BSEE held two workshops with environmental justice communities, to ground truth our objectives and to gather thoughts and feedback on next steps. Input from these meetings is shared below.

External Workshop #1 March 2024

- BSEE and BOEM conducted a joint Environmental Justice Strategy Dialogue Meeting with participants from various environmental justice communities. The meeting goals were to
 - Expand the exchange of knowledge with communities,
 - Bolster environmental justice within bureau planning, policies, procedures, and decision making, and
 - Jointly discuss possible near-term actions.
- Participant feedback centered around
 - effective communication (BSEE Environmental Justice Objective 4.1, 4.2),
 - increasing capacity (BSEE Environmental Justice Objective 4.1, 4.2), and
 - overlapping jurisdictions (BSEE Environmental Justice Objective 2.1, 3.2).
- [BOEM and BSEE Environmental Justice Strategy Dialogue Participant Summary Report \(March 19, 2024\)](#).

External Workshop #2 October 2024

- BSEE met again with participants from various environmental justice communities to hear if the final goals, objectives, and actions responded to community expectations, for suggestions on steps to implement these goals, and for feedback on how well BSEE incorporated their feedback.
- Discussion with participants centered on:
 - budgeting (BSEE Environmental Justice Objective 1.3, 3.2),
 - the importance of language (BSEE Environmental Justice Goal 1), and
 - interagency collaboration (BSEE Environmental Justice Objective 2.1).

MEASUREMENTS

BSEE will measure success by assessing change at the objective and goal levels. Progress toward individual actions will be measured in milestones outlined by the action champion. Indicators of success will be established by the staff leading and supporting the actions contributing to each objective and goal. BSEE will also incorporate cross-agency metrics used in the Environmental Justice Scorecard.

Examples of measurement tools for changes in internal practices, growth in partnerships, and increase in knowledge bases at the objective and goal levels could be periodic (before, during, and after events) surveys, quantitative data from self-reported surveys using Likert scales, and qualitative data from surveys, interviews, or focus groups.

Progress will be assessed on individual actions quarterly. In December of each year, BSEE will publish progress on achieving its objectives and goals on our website at <https://www.bsee.gov/environmental-stewardship/environmental-justice>.

Examples of changes to be assessed include, but are not limited to:

- Number of environmental justice trainings added to the BSEE training catalog
- Number/percentage of environmental justice trainings achieving training objectives
- Rating of the coordination roles and responsibilities undertaken by leadership
- Number of key actionable findings, experiences, and lessons learned captured, evaluated, synthesized, and packaged
- Level of reciprocity in knowledge sharing
- Degree adaptive approaches have contributed to BSEE's environmental justice implementation (i.e., specific norms and behaviors reported to have changed and why, and the implications of those changes)
- Number of BSEE staff confident in ability to share knowledge about impacts to communities
- Level of community engagement and satisfaction (i.e., response time rates, frequency of interactions, quality of communication)