



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

December 5, 2023

Ms. Peggy Shepard
Chair, White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Mr. Richard Moore
Chair, White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Dear Ms. Shepard and Mr. Moore,

On behalf of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), and as Chair of the White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council (IAC), I offer my deep gratitude to you and the members of the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council (WHEJAC) for your extensive advice and recommendations. The WHEJAC's expertise is vital to the continued efforts of the Biden-Harris Administration to reduce burdens and harms to communities facing environmental injustices, deliver benefits to disadvantaged communities as part of President Biden's Justice40 Initiative, and institutionalize environmental justice across the Federal Government.

Thank you for your recent recommendations on the [National Ambient Air Quality Standards](#) (NAAQS); [climate planning, preparedness, response, and impacts](#); and [carbon management](#). In addition to reviewing these recommendations within CEQ, I have shared the recommendations related to the work of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with our EPA colleagues. Your recommendations have also been shared with the IAC. We are giving your advice and questions on these key topics careful consideration as we move forward in our work.

The WHEJAC's recommendations have already helped shape and advance historic initiatives across the Biden-Harris Administration, including the President's Justice40 Initiative. Last week, in line with our shared goals of transparency and accountability, the Administration [published](#) the list of Inflation Reduction Act programs working to advance the Justice40 Initiative. The 74 Inflation Reduction Act grant, rebate, loan, and other funding programs now covered by the Justice40 Initiative together add up to over \$118 billion in Federal funding. In addition, we expect many of the Inflation Reduction Act's tax credits will benefit disadvantaged communities because the law provides bonus incentives for private sector clean energy development in low-income areas and in energy communities. With the addition of Inflation Reduction Act programs, nearly 520 programs across 19 Federal agencies are being reimagined and transformed through the Justice40 Initiative to maximize benefits to disadvantaged communities. Through the Justice40 Initiative, Federal agencies are working to ensure the benefits of the President's historic Investing in America agenda are reaching communities right now, such as cleaner air, good-paying jobs, and affordable clean energy.

Alongside our ongoing work to advance the Justice40 Initiative, I would like to share additional updates on work occurring across the Administration to advance environmental justice, related to your recent recommendations.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards

As you are aware, EPA sets National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six pollutants that are harmful to public health and the environment, including particulate matter (PM) and ozone. Earlier this year, EPA proposed to take an important step forward to strengthen the primary (health-based) annual PM_{2.5} standard from its current level of 12.0 µg/m³ to within the range of 9.0 to 10.0 µg/m³ and took public comment on that proposed rule. EPA anticipates issuing a final rule in the coming months.

In August 2023, EPA commenced a new review of the ozone NAAQS. As part of this new review, EPA will create an up-to-date scientific record and develop new science and policy assessments. This review provides an opportunity for EPA to consider newer scientific studies and updated analyses; obtain further advice from the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee; and engage with the public. EPA published a [call for information](#) in the *Federal Register* on August 25, 2023, and expects to hold a science-policy workshop in Spring 2024.

Safe and Responsible Deployment of Carbon Management Technologies, with Environmental Justice Front-and-Center

Congress directed the Administration to advance carbon capture, utilization, and sequestration technology (CCUS), including through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and we are committed to ensuring that carbon management projects are designed, built, and operated safely and responsibly, in a way that reflects the best science and responds to the needs and inputs of local communities. Across the Administration, Federal agencies are creating opportunities for direct engagement with communities on carbon management technologies, such as the U.S.

Department of Energy's [Energy Justice to the People Roadshow](#) and local engagements related to the [Regional Direct Air Capture Hubs](#) and [Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs](#). Federal agencies are also issuing guidance to identify, analyze, and work to address environmental justice concerns in the context of implementing and overseeing carbon management programs, including EPA's [Memorandum on Environmental Justice Guidance in Class VI Permitting and Primacy](#). CEQ has also released [guidance](#) to agencies to help ensure CCUS projects are environmentally sound and cut cumulative pollution in nearby communities.

CEQ will continue to engage with our Federal agency partners as we review and consider your recommendations and evaluate your concerns on the public health and safety risks associated with carbon management technologies. The Administration's approach will also be informed by engagement with the broad-based membership of the CCUS permitting task forces that Congress created in the Utilizing Significant Emissions with Innovative Technologies (USE IT) Act.

Thank you again for your dedication and support as we work to further advance and realize the Biden-Harris Administration's historic environmental justice commitments. While we still have a long way to go until environmental justice is a reality for all, I am proud of the progress we have made and of the public servants across the Federal Government championing this work. On behalf of CEQ, I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the WHEJAC to further advance a whole-of-government approach to environmental justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Mallory". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brenda Mallory
Chair