

**Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)  
Equity and Environmental Justice + Public Health & Safety**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting Date: November 15, 2022**

**Meeting Time: 4:30 - 6:00 PM**

**Zoom Recording: [EEJ + Public Health & Safety Working Group](#)**

**ATTENDANCE:** GC3 Working Group Members in bold

Name:
<b>Heather Aaron, Co-chair</b>
Alanis Allen
<b>Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig, Co-chair</b>
Ashley Benitez
<b>Brenda Bergeron, Co-chair</b>
<b>Kendall Bobula</b>
<b>Richard Branigan</b>
<b>Mary Buchanan</b>
Ruth Canovi
<b>Stephanye Clarke</b>
<b>Lee Cruz, Co-chair</b>
<b>Kathy Fay</b>
Rebecca French
<b>Christine Hahn-Dunn</b>
<b>Annie Harper</b>
<b>Anne Hulick</b>
Doris Johnson
<b>Sarah Lowe</b>
<b>Diane Mas</b>
<b>Lori Mathieu</b>
<b>Huan Ngo</b>
<b>Jennifer O'Brien</b>
<b>Martha Page</b>
<b>Michael Pascucilla</b>
Edith Pestana
<b>Allison Pilcher</b>
Kaleigh Pitcher
<b>Christopher Silver</b>
<b>Bridget Teevan</b>
<b>Max Teirstein</b>
<b>Steven Wallett</b>
<b>Aicha Woods</b>
<b>Joanna Wozniak-Brown</b>
<b>Kim Zigich</b>

**AGENDA & NOTES**

**Welcome:** Ashley Benitez Ou, DEEP Liaison and Rebecca French, Director, Office of Climate Planning

Ground Rules:

- Meeting is recorded and a link will be posted
- Announcement that the chat is public record, but may be used for questions and comments by working group members
- Working group members are asked to post their names and affiliation in the chat
- Reminder that the discussion portion is reserved for working group members
- Announcement that non-working group members should mute and turn video off until public comment
- Shared additional working group participation guidance and ground rules, which was informed by the EEJ working group
- Public comment guidance was also shared

**Welcome and Introductions:**

- Introductions by the Equity and Environmental Justice working group co-chairs, Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig and Lee Cruz
- Rebecca French presents charge for Equity and Environmental Justice working group
  - Completed: identifying members to serve on other GC3 working groups
  - In progress: Reviewing and providing comments on each working group presentation (throughout November)
  - In progress: Present to GC3 on EEJ findings (early December)
    - There are no new strategies being presented to GC3, rather the focus is on evaluating and monitoring

**Review of 4 Core Concepts of Equity:** *Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig, Yale Center for Environmental Justice*

- Kristin notes that she will present on concepts of equity, though there are many other definitions
- Provides definition for equity and notes how equity and climate change intersect
- 4 Core Concepts of Equity:
  - Distributive: Placing the most vulnerable communities at the forefront of any potential benefits a policy might create, ensuring that the distribution of the benefits and burdens of climate change mitigation and adaptation are equitably distributed
    - Ex. Prioritizing underserved farmers for priority funding
  - Procedural: Planning in partnership with low-income communities and BIPOC communities (“Nothing about us without us”)
    - Ex. Communities are engaged in a meaningful way to provide feedback

- Contextual: Assessing the vulnerabilities of communities across Connecticut to climate change, due to the legacy of racial and income inequality and other factors
  - Ex. Hiring people from communities to engage in programming in their communities
- Corrective: Providing communities with clear processes to hold the state accountable to its commitments to pursue equity
  - Ex. GC3 process should ensure that communities have mechanisms for holding public leaders accountable

**Review of Public Participation Guidance:** *Alex Rodriguez, Environmental Justice Specialist, Save the Sound*

- Presentation will expand on procedural equity points raised by Kristin
- 4 Principles for Public Participation:
  - Transparent and Accountable Decision Making
    - Communities need a clear definition of the problem and guidance in navigating systems of power
    - Developed a 9-point checklist aligned with this principle, which provides guidance from data usage, to working with community leaders, to media guidance
  - Accessible and Inclusive Decision Making
    - Consideration of this principle can look like greater attention to scheduling public hearings so that communities can readily participate
    - 5 points in the checklist are devoted to this principle
    - Checklist points include fair notice, interpretation services, meeting schedules, selection of congregation locations, and the inclusion of technology that makes in-person meetings more accessible
  - Equal Partnerships, Co-Production, and Self-Determination
    - 3 checklist points around ensuring meaningful community participation in meetings by limiting power dynamics and ensuring that next step actions and follow-ups are documented
  - Respect, Efficacy, and Non-Exploitation
    - 5 checklist points to guide relationships, follow ups, and resource identification

**CT Environmental Justice Communities as Defined by Statute, 22a-20a:** *Edith Pestana, Environmental Justice Admin, DEEP and Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, DEEP*

- CGS DEEP State Policy Ch. 439: 22a-20a
  - Defines environmental justice communities
    - Economically distressed (DECD criteria)
  - Defines specific affected facilities

- Requires permit applicants to engage with the public
- May provide an opportunity to negotiate a community benefit agreement to reduce or mitigate pollution

**Public Health and Safety Working Group Presentations:** *Deputy Commissioner Heather Aaron, Department of Public Health, Co-chair, Deputy Commissioner Brenda Bergeron, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Co-chair*

Updates from Public Health & Safety Working Group: *DC Aaron*

- Discussed public health grants
  - Received three grants within Office of Climate and Public Health
    - BRACE
    - CDC Covid-19 Disparities
    - EPA Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring
- Notes focus on food security
  - Subcommittee created on Food Security and Climate
    - Researched other state's initiatives in this arena
    - Defined group's missions
    - Discussed other people to engage and what topics should be prioritized
  - Connecticut does not have a food security action plan, unlike other states in the region
    - Subcommittee will help design targets for production and distribution by food category and location
    - Develop and implement policies and procedures and plans to ensure the regional food supply is sufficient to weather supply chain disruptions caused by climate change and pandemics

Mental Health and Disaster Response: *Brenda Bergeron*

- Mass Care Working Group provides recommendations to DEMHS Advisory Council
  - Mental Health & Climate Change is a new initiative to checklist and annex to address mental health issues related to emergencies
  - Will meet again in early December

**Discussion:** *Facilitated by EEJ Co-Chairs; Full comments can be found on the Zoom recording and/or audio transcripts*

- *What successful applications of the equity and environmental justice lens did you hear in the presentation today?*
  - Noted the importance of working collaboratively alongside EJ community members and to not come in as advocates with their own agenda
  - Focusing community level monitoring on high need areas
  - A lot of natural overlap in climate change and health and expanding the conversation about mental health in emergencies is very important

- In some states, Citizen Science projects are categorized by agency, which could be an important consideration for Connecticut since these projects are highly engaging and have the capacity to empower communities
- *What are the rural environmental justice issues the Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry working group should consider as they apply the equity lens going forward?*
  - Citizen Science projects and participatory mapping are both tools that can advance government initiatives while centering EJ values
  - There is a lot to be learned from how communities are *already* taking care of each other and how they have historically cared for each other
  - Ensure findings are distributed in multiple languages
- *How might we break down the perceived siloes of urban versus rural environmental justice communities? What are the opportunities for cross-fertilization?*
  - Recognize that so many things related to climate disaster involve high asphalt coverage and lack of tree cover

**Public Comments:** *For full comments please see the Zoom recording and/or audio transcript*

None

### **Adjourn and Next Steps:**

### **Resources:**

[EEJ Public Guidance Excerpt](#)

[Distressed Municipalities List](#)

[DEEP Environmental Justice Communities](#)

### **Chat Record:**

00:17:23 Martha Page: Martha Page, CT Food System Alliance, Hartford, CT

00:17:36 Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig: Hello Everyone! Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig - Program Manager, Yale Center for Environmental Justice, EEJ Working Group Co-Chair

00:18:17 Sarah Lowe: Hi everyone! Sarah Lowe - Dept of Social & Behavioral Sciences, Yale School of Public Health - Public Health and Safety Working group

00:18:56 Allison Pilcher: Hi all! Allison Pilcher, Policy Director with the Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs

00:19:01 Anne Hulick: Hi everyone. Anne Hulick, CT Director of Clean Water Action, nurse and long time member/liaison to the CT Nurses Association

00:19:19 Kathy Fay: Good evening,! Kathy Fay, Director of Community Sustainability, NHS of New Haven

00:20:00 Brenda Bergeron: Hi there! Brenda Bergeron, Deputy Commissioner, DESPP/Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

00:20:08 Diane Mas: Hi All - Diane Mas, Chief Resilience Officer at Fuss & O'Neill, Public Health & Safety Working Group.

00:20:49 Aicha Woods: Hello! Aicha Woods, FC Center for Housing Opportunity, EJ wg

00:20:49 Richard Branigan: Good afternoon everyone. This is Richard Branigan, Regional Chief Operating Officer for the American Red Cross in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

00:20:50 Annie Harper: Annie Harper, Research Scientist, Yale Department of Psychiatry

00:20:53 Mary Buchanan: Hi all, Mary Buchanan, Community Resilience Planner at CIRCA

00:22:34 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: Good evening. Rebecca French here, Director of the Office of Climate Planning and joined by Office of Climate Planning team members Ashley Benitez and Alanis Allen to help run tonight's meeting.

00:23:59 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: Hi, everyone! I forgot to introduce myself. Ashley G. Benitez-Ou, Environmental Analyst, Office of Climate Planning at DEEP.

00:33:05 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: Tonight's agenda: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-2022-agendas-and-minutes/GC3-EEJ-Public-Health-and-Safety-Agenda-111522.pdf>

00:34:36 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: Alex is summarizing the GC3 2020 public participation guidance found here: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-2022-agendas-and-minutes/EEJ-Public-Guidance-Excerpt.pdf>

00:40:13 Heather Aaron: Hello Everyone I am Heather Aaron Deputy Commissioner for the Department of Public Health.

00:42:17 Lori Mathieu: Hello everyone, I am Lori Mathieu, Public Health Branch Chief, Environmental Health & Drinking Water Branch, CT DPH

00:45:54 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: If anyone has clarifying questions about the training presentations tonight, please put them in the chat

00:48:02 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Environmental-Justice/Environmental-Justice-Communities>

00:48:45 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Environmental-Justice/Demographics-and-Affecting-Facilities-Web-Map>

00:50:30 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: If questions come to mind, you can post them here and we can answer in the chat.

00:54:15 Michael Pascucilla: Good Evening - I forget to introduce myself also. I am Michael Pascucilla and I am with the East Shore District Health Department.

00:54:35 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: Edith.Pestana@ct.gov for any questions regarding CT Environmental Justice Communities.

01:04:34 Diane Mas: Thank you for the presentations. I need to leave for another meeting. Have a good evening.

01:05:23 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: Please come on camera!

01:05:56 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: Follow the ground rules for respectful discussion attached to the agenda and keep this list in your mind.

Focused, no-fault problem-solving.

Step forward, step back.

Open, honest, safe space.

Listen with open minds, believe in everyone's best intentions.

Action-oriented. Decide what we want, when we want it, and plan for its happening.

Collaboration!

Start, proceed, and end on time, honor the agenda.

01:06:06 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: Discussion questions for today's working group meeting:

-What successful applications of the equity and environmental justice lens did you hear in the presentation today?

This group focused on mental health, food insecurity and urban heat islands in their first three meetings. Please discuss how the different definitions of equity can be applied to these issues.

-What strategies might the Public Health and Safety working group consider to further integrate the different definitions of equity into their work on these topics?

01:09:41 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: Great comments Anne

01:10:24 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: The Public Health & Safety working group discussed several topics including Overview of 2020 Public Health & Safety Recommendations, Brief Presentation of Progress on Public Health and Safety 2021 Recommendations and two discussion of subject area priorities: 1) Heat Islands and 2) Food Security & Mental Health.

01:13:35 Jennifer O'Brien: Agree on mental health. It is so often overlooked.

01:13:55 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: I want to acknowledge the great collaboration between DPH & DESPP that have emerged from GC3! Thank you for all your work!

01:14:51 Brenda Bergeron: Thank you, we have a very productive team!

01:15:02 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: I see our friends Jennifer O'Brien and Stephanye Clarke here tonight. Alanis and I co-created a workshop in New London and Groton and we have a local public health director as one of our speakers. At first I think she did not see that public health connection, but this working group has shined a light on the intersection that we applied in that workshop.

01:17:11 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: Second question:

-What strategies might the Public Health and Safety working group consider to further integrate the different definitions of equity into their work on these topics?

01:20:34 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: @richard if you have examples of how and where you have conducted meetings or other tools that would help us better engage faith leaders, please share.

01:21:46 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: DEEP tracks community water quality monitoring projects

01:22:24 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: I think the air quality monitoring project mentioned by DPH where DEEP is also a partner is another example of citizen science

01:22:24 Max Teirstein: Citizen science gets flack for being poor quality data, but the truth is that it's really high quality, "equaling or even surpassing professional data collection" in most cases. (<https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.1436>)

01:23:00 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: That's right, Max! Thanks for sharing.

01:25:16 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: Citizen/participatory mapping is also another great tool to work together with communities and build on local knowledge.

01:25:29 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: We appreciate feedback from everyone on the working groups about in person vs. Zoom engagement as we look ahead to 2023.

01:26:08 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: If anyone would like to provide public comments let me know!



01:27:30 Michael Pascucilla: Agreed - these volunteers are passionate and care about their communities. And many of them are scientists. They also help us get support for policy and funding. And yes, their data is solid when CS projects are well organized.

01:28:23 Max Teirstein: We can also think of participatory mapping as a tool for engaging communities in climate decision-making—particularly if we can pay them to do it.

01:29:50 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: Compensation has come up in Mitigation Strategies as well for engagement.

01:30:52 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: I want to highlight the Climate and Equity Grant and UConn CIRCA and DEEP are co-sponsoring. @mary Buchanan here tonight is the program manager. <https://circa.uconn.edu/2022/10/20/applications-open-for-climate-and-equity-grant-program/>

01:32:37 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: In terms of contextual equity: documents and findings should be distributed in more languages.

01:32:58 Joanna Wozniak-Brown: In the EJ Mapping tool, there will be direct statewide engagement to hear what environmental health concerns residents have then work on spatial representations (instead of presuming what they see as important) to put that in the map so it will 'meet' with mapping layers that are known to represent determinants of health.

01:33:20 Mary Buchanan: The statewide EJ Mapping tool that is currently in progress also has an associated Mapping Tool Advisory Committee (grant-funded to compensate for participants' time), through which both community-based organizations and individuals with lived experience will repeatedly meet to review and engage with the drafts of the mapping tool as it's developed and refined. Here's the website for the EJ Mapping Tool: <https://connecticut-environmental-justice.circa.uconn.edu/>

01:33:41 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: That's great, Joanna!

01:34:13 Kathy Fay: It is important to allocate both funds and time to foster community engagement. Agencies need to keep in mind that putting together engagement events and getting feedback from communities requires a longer time frame than "business as usual."

01:34:50 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: Anyone for public comments?

01:36:20 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: Great work from CIRCA!

01:39:53 Mary Buchanan: CIRCA is also working with a consultant to develop a vulnerability index for extreme heat, which will be a statewide layer that can be mapped in GIS.

01:39:56 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: I think there is a lot of leveraging we can do with new federal resources focused in this space too. We had a great presentation from former EEJ working group member Adrienne Houel on a project she is doing with Dept. of Energy.

01:40:07 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: That was in mitigation strategies

01:40:27 Joanna Wozniak-Brown: Yes on the heat islands too, thank you, DC Bergeron.

01:41:02 Rebecca French, Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP: Heat is definitely a new focus on climate adaptation and resilience nationally.

01:42:03 Ashley Benitez, Climate Planning, CTDEEP: My deepest appreciation to our EEJ working group members for your presence in all the meetings we had in the previous days!

Thank you to the PH&S for your participation today! So great to hear from all of you.

01:42:20 Max Teirstein: Thank you for your wonderful presentations, all!

01:43:35 Kathy Fay: I also would not dismiss the power of remote engagement. At the beginning of the pandemic very few of us were skilled at meeting remotely, but the GC3 process was able to engage many more community stakeholders over a more sustained duration than in the original round. Similarly, in the local community many more people are able to meet remotely now compared to a few years ago. Of course it isn't the same as meeting in person, but it is valuable due to removing travel issues.

01:43:41 Huan Ngo: Thank you!

01:43:44 Kathy Fay: thank you