

**Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3)
Equity and Environmental Justice + Climate Smart
Agriculture and Forestry
MEETING MINUTES**

Meeting Date: November 10, 2022

Meeting Time: 4:30 - 6:00 PM

Zoom Recording: [EEJ + Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Working Group](#)

ATTENDANCE: GC3 Working Group Members in bold

Name:
Alanis Allen
Francia Alvarez
Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig, Co-chair
Ashley Benitez
Amy Blaymore-Paterson
Mary Buchanan
Juliet Cain
Frank Cervo
Lee Cruz, Co-chair
Rebecca French
Chelsea Gazillo
Eric Hammerling
Lisa Hayden
Maebel Haynes
Bryan Hurlburt, Co-chair
Doris Johnson
Christopher Martin
Michele Melley
JoAnn Messina
Allison Pilcher
Bonnie Potocki
Alexander Rodriguez
Lilian Ruiz
Denise Savageau
Max Teirstein
Laura Tessier
Mason Trumble, Co-chair
David Wagner
Sarah Watson
Brad Weeks
Jason White
Aicha Woods
Joanna Wozniak-Brown
Michael Wrobel

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

Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Presentations: *Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt, Department of Agriculture and Chris Martin, DEEP*

- 3 public meetings that focused on the following topics:
 - Farmland Restoration Grant and CSAF Grant concept
 - Climate smart forestry practices and considerations
 - CSAF Grant and Inflation Reduction Act forestry opportunities
- Dept. Of Agriculture has expanded initiatives to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion both within the agency and in program outreach
 - Programmatic initiatives:
 - Launched DOAg DEI working group to work across four topics
 - One of only 3 DEI working groups within Department of Agriculture nationally
 - Topic areas:
 - Access to secure land tenure
 - Access to education and training
 - Access to resources and capitol
 - Market access and diversification
 - Programmatic initiatives are instrumental in supporting current and future farmers and BIPOC members of the agricultural industry
- Notes the billions of dollars made available by the Inflation Reduction Act
- Connecticut is well poised to take advantage of these funds
- Shares tools and resources that have guided equity and environmental decision making in the forestry realm

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?*
- *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?*
 - Rural communities must travel significant distances to participate in their local and state governments
 - Rural, poor communities have been forgotten a bit in Connecticut and deserve more earnest attention
 - Tribal communities should also be incorporated in these conversations in intentional and meaningful ways
 - Logistical considerations for rural communities, like broadband internet
- *How might we break down the perceived siloes of urban versus rural environmental justice communities? What are the opportunities for cross-fertilization?*
 - Agriculture and food security overlap in important ways

- Forest-to-faucet is misunderstood in that many don't realize forestry practices outside of cities affect water quality within cities

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:

00:34:38 Chelsea Gazillo: Chelsea Gazillo -- Working Lands Alliance/American Farmland Trust

00:34:40 Frank Cervo - DEEP Forestry - he/him: Frank Cervo, CT DEEP, Eastern District Service Forester

00:34:53 Eric Hammerling, CFPA: Hi Everyone, Eric Hammerling, Executive Director, Connecticut Forest & Park Association

00:34:59 Mary Buchanan (CIRCA, she/her): Mary Buchanan, Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA)

00:35:04 Jason White: Jason White, Director, CT Agricultural Experiment Station

00:35:07 Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig: Hello Everyone! Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig, Program Manager at the Yale Center for Environmental Justice and EEJ Working Group Co-Chair

00:35:13 Denise Savageau: Denise Savageau, GC3 EEJ Work Group
CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation

00:35:21 Allison Pilcher: Hi everyone! Allison Pilcher, Policy Director with the Connecticut Roundtable on Climate and Jobs

00:35:29 Maebel Haynes: Maebel Haynes - EEJ Member, Sunrise Movement CT National Correspondent, Liaison between Litchfield High school environmental club and Litchfield Sustainability council

00:35:37 Lisa Hayden: Hello all - Lisa Hayden, Outreach Manager, New England Forestry Foundation

00:35:41 Lilian Ruiz: Lilian Ruiz

00:35:50 Lee Cruz: Lee Cruz, Cochair GC3 Equity & EJ Working Group

00:36:17 Lilian Ruiz: Lilian Ruiz GC3 Ag and Forestry Group, CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation

00:37:11 Juliet Cain: Juliet Cain, Pollinator Pathway

00:47:37 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: Thanks everyone for joining. Here is a link to today's agenda: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-2022-agendas-and-minutes/GC3-EEJ--Climate-Smart-Ag-and-Forestry-Meeting-Agenda-111022.pdf>

00:48:20 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: Equity & Environmental Justice members
Climate Smart Ag. & Forestry members

Please introduce yourselves in the chat.

00:49:06 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: If you would like to sign-up for public comment, please send me a direct message.

00:51:01 Eric Hammerling, CFPA: These important concepts of equity are in a helpful chart on page 11 of the EEJ Working Group's 2020 Report here: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-working-group-reports/GC3_Equity_EJ_Final_Report_111320.pdf

00:57:21 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: Alex is going over the materials explained in more depth in this excerpt from the EEJ working group. <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/climatechange/GC3/GC3-2022-agendas-and-minutes/EEJ-Public-Guidance-Excerpt.pdf>

01:09:45 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: if you have questions for the presenters, please put them in the chat.

01:10:08 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: we will answer from the chat because we are a few minutes behind our agenda schedule.

01:16:00 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: DECD Distressed Municipalities list: https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/About_DECD/Research-and-Publications/02_Review_Publications/Distressed-Municipalities

01:16:33 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Environmental-Justice/Environmental-Justice-Communities>

01:17:57 Denise Savageau: For Clarity, Are we looking at communities that have been in the list within the last 5 years when, for example, in a grant application.

01:18:10 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: We are looking at the current (2022) list.

01:19:26 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: Previous lists are in the link that Rebecca shared (the one after the last link).

01:20:59 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: @denise for the DEEP Climate Resilience Fund we will also honor the policy of DECD that those communities that were part of the distressed municipality list in the last five years are still eligible for benefits under programs, including grants.

01:21:21 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/ADaRC/ADaRC/Grants/Climate-Smart-Agriculture-and-Forestry-Grant>

01:22:16 Denise Savageau: Thanks Rebecca. I think the 5 year is a good rule since towns tend to drop on and off the list each year.

01:30:12 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: If you would like to sign up for public comment, please send a direct message to Ashley Benitez

01:31:02 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/Boards/Boards/Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Working-Group>

01:38:06 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: Guiding questions for discussion (EEJ members, we would like to hear from you):

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

We learned today that the state statute for environmental justice communities includes communities across the state that are economically distressed and have concentrated poverty. These communities are in rural, suburban and urban areas.

-What are the rural environmental justice issues the Climate-smart Agriculture & Forestry working group should consider as they apply the equity lens going forward?

- How might we break down the perceived siloes of urban versus rural environmental justice communities? What are the opportunities for cross-fertilization?

01:38:56 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: Please come on camera working group members :)

01:43:31 Sarah Watson, DEEP Office of Climate Planning (she/her): Link to CIRCA's Climate Justice and Equity Grant Program: <https://circa.uconn.edu/environmental-justice/climate-and-equity-grant-program/>

01:46:29 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: 2nd set of questions:

-What are the rural environmental justice issues the Climate-smart Agriculture & Forestry working group should consider as they apply the equity lens going forward?

- How might we break down the perceived siloes of urban versus rural environmental justice communities? What are the opportunities for cross-fertilization?

01:46:33 Eric Hammerling, CFPA: Kristin asked about successes, it's good to note that DEEP has made significant investments in Urban Forestry/Climate grants over the past year working with the CT Urban Forest Council and others. It is good news that Chris mentioned that thanks to an infusion of federal funds these kinds of investments will hopefully continue.

01:48:53 Maebel Haynes: I would be interested in seeing that map overlaid with a map of CT towns that are majority BIPOC or Puerto Rican

01:49:32 Eric Hammerling, CFPA: Contextual Equity would hopefully include consideration of low-income rural communities as should Procedural Equity.

01:50:27 Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig: Successes: Developing a DEI working group can have a huge impact in navigating the context-specific issues that will make a difference in implementation.

01:50:46 Mason Trumble: Thank you Eric! The Forestry team has made incredible progress over the past couple years related to urban forestry - with multiple grant opportunities available. If anyone is interested in learning more DEEP grants, you can find more information here - <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Forestry/Urban-Forestry/Urban-Forestry-Grant-Opportunities>

01:51:16 Bryan Hurlburt, CT DoAg: Farmland Preservation Grant info - <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/Farmland-Preservation/Farmland-Preservation-Program---Traditional#:~:text=The%20traditional%20Farmland%20Preservation%20Program%20%28FPP%29%20is%20the,defined%20by%20the%20United%20State%20Department%20of%20Agriculture.>

01:51:30 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: Let me know if you'd like to provide public comments.

01:52:01 Joanna Wozniak-Brown: Land affordability, affordable housing, and housing for temporary workers are co-considerations rural areas

01:54:05 Bryan Hurlburt, CT DoAg: UConn Extension has done a great job engaging with the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation on the creation of the Tribal Dept of Ag. <https://ctnations.cahn.uconn.edu/tribes-extension-program/#>

01:55:16 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: Thank you sharing Commissioner.

01:55:25 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: Looking ahead 2023, what are some equity and environmental justice tools, practices and other that we might collaborate together to support the work of the GC3!

01:56:28 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: We already talk about developing checklist to go over future recommendations and best EEJ practices by sector/topic. I think that's a great idea.

01:57:05 Chelsea Gazillo: Sorry having some computer issues! Land ownership is something that was implemented here by white settlers. Looking at creative ways to make land

available to CT's indigenous communities is key. How do we allow cultural respect easements? Also -- a lot of rural communities are considered what USDA calls "food deserts" some practitioners call these areas "food apartheid" -- how do we increase local food access for folks living in rural areas?

01:57:11 Max Teirstein: How will folks be made aware of the Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Grant? How can we support outreach and engagement around that?

01:57:41 Mary Buchanan (CIRCA, she/her): Another thing to consider for supporting rural agricultural operations is processing/marketing infrastructure for value-added products. I've heard from farmers in Windham County who have to drive to New Haven for processing.

01:58:38 Eric Hammerling, CFPA: Hopeful that EEJ and Working & Natural Lands working group recommendations from 2020 and 2021 will continue to be carried forward. Thanks to all for staying engaged on these important issues!

01:59:02 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP: We should also try to make better use of social media.

01:59:25 Max Teirstein: ^^ Farmers groups/pages on Facebook, for instance

02:01:16 Rebecca French, CT DEEP: Great intersections here with food insecurity discussions that have come up in the Public Health & Safety working group.

02:01:36 Sarah Watson, DEEP Office of Climate Planning (she/her):

<https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/Marketing/Marketing/Connecticut-Weekly-Agricultural-Report>

02:01:56 Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig: Thank you Sarah!

02:04:26 Denise Savageau: The nexus between water supply, food supply, and energy conservation is critical discussion on climate change mitigation/adaptation. Mostly related to Working and Natural Lands - ag, soils, forests, water.

02:04:27 Ashley Benitez, Office of Climate Planning CT-DEEP:

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Climate-Change/GC3/Working-Group-Meetings-2022>

You can find the next meetings agendas and the recordings on that link.

02:04:51 Mason Trumble: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Forestry/Urban-Forestry/Urban-Forestry-Grant-Opportunities>

02:05:25 Kristin Barendregt-Ludwig: Congratulations!