



News Release



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Cal/EPA releases draft environmental health screening tool for public input

Draft tool to assess cumulative impacts of pollution in California communities

SACRAMENTO – A proposal for a valuable new tool to screen the environmental health of California's communities is being released by the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA) for review and input by the general public and stakeholders.

The draft California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool (CalEnviroScreen) uses existing environmental, health and socio-economic data to compare the cumulative impacts of environmental pollution on the state's communities.

"Our objective is to provide state and local decision makers with information that will enable them to focus their time, resources and programs on those portions of the state that are most in need of assistance," said Cal/EPA Secretary Matt Rodriguez. "We look forward to working with a diverse group of stakeholders and the public in order to refine and improve this tool."

"The draft screening tool is meant to present a broad picture of the burdens and vulnerabilities different areas face from environmental pollutants," said George Alexeeff, Director of Cal/EPA's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA).

While the draft CalEnviroScreen is a work in progress, the final version is expected to be an important aid to ongoing planning and decision making by Cal/EPA and other entities. In a time of limited resources, the tool can help provide insight into how those resources can be best used to improve the environmental health of all Californians.

Potential uses include guidance for grant allocations and prioritizing cleanup and abatement projects to direct resources to the communities with the greatest need. The tool could also help to prioritize enforcement of environmental laws and inform planning decisions about sustainable economic development investments in heavily impacted communities.

"We're pleased to finally see progress on an effort to help identify and direct resources to our most polluted communities in California," said Nidia Bautista, Policy Director for Coalition for Clean Air. "This is a critically important role so many of us envision for Cal/EPA. We look forward to continued discussions and engaging in the public process so that real improvements can be experienced by residents in these neighborhoods."

"We welcome the opportunity to work with Cal/EPA and OEHHA on their efforts to address

Environmental Justice and Cumulative Impacts in a thoughtful and meaningful manner,” said Bill Quinn, Vice President of the California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance. “We are pleased to be a part of the Cumulative Impacts & Precautionary Approaches (CIPA) Workgroup and look forward to many productive meetings. We are committed to working with all stakeholders to provide real solutions to community concerns including that of protecting and creating jobs.”

Cal/EPA is committed to an open and public process for developing the final tool. Input from California communities, the general public, businesses, and other stakeholders is critical to the success of this project. To maximize its value, Cal/EPA is seeking comments about the data sources and methodologies in the draft and ways to best use the tool in decision making.

Today’s release of the draft proposal will be followed by an August 7 meeting of the Cumulative Impacts and Precautionary Approaches Work Group and a series of five public workshops during the month of August. The August 7 meeting will be held in Sacramento and workshops will follow on August 21 in Los Angeles, August 22 in San Bernardino, August 23 in San Diego, September 5 in Fresno and September 6 in Oakland. Cal/EPA is also seeking peer-review from academic experts at a September 7 public meeting in Seaside.

The deadline for submitting public comments is September 18. The final Work Group meeting on the draft tool will be held on October 9 in Sacramento, and release of the final tool will follow later this year.

Development of the tool stems from Cal/EPA’s Environmental Justice Action Plan. The draft released today implements and expands on Cal/EPA’s December 2010 report, “Cumulative Impacts: Building A Scientific Foundation.”

The draft tool and supporting materials, including information about the workshops, are available at <http://oehha.ca.gov/ej/cipa073012.html>.

To provide public comment on the draft California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool, please contact:

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The California Environmental Protection Agency is charged with developing, implementing and enforcing the state's environmental protection laws that ensure clean air, clean water, clean soil, safe pesticides and waste recycling and reduction. Our departments are at the forefront of environmental science, using cutting-edge research to shape the state's environmental laws. Cal/EPA is home to the California Air Resources Board, State Water Resources Control Board, Department of Pesticide Regulation, Department of Resource Recycling and Recovery, Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

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