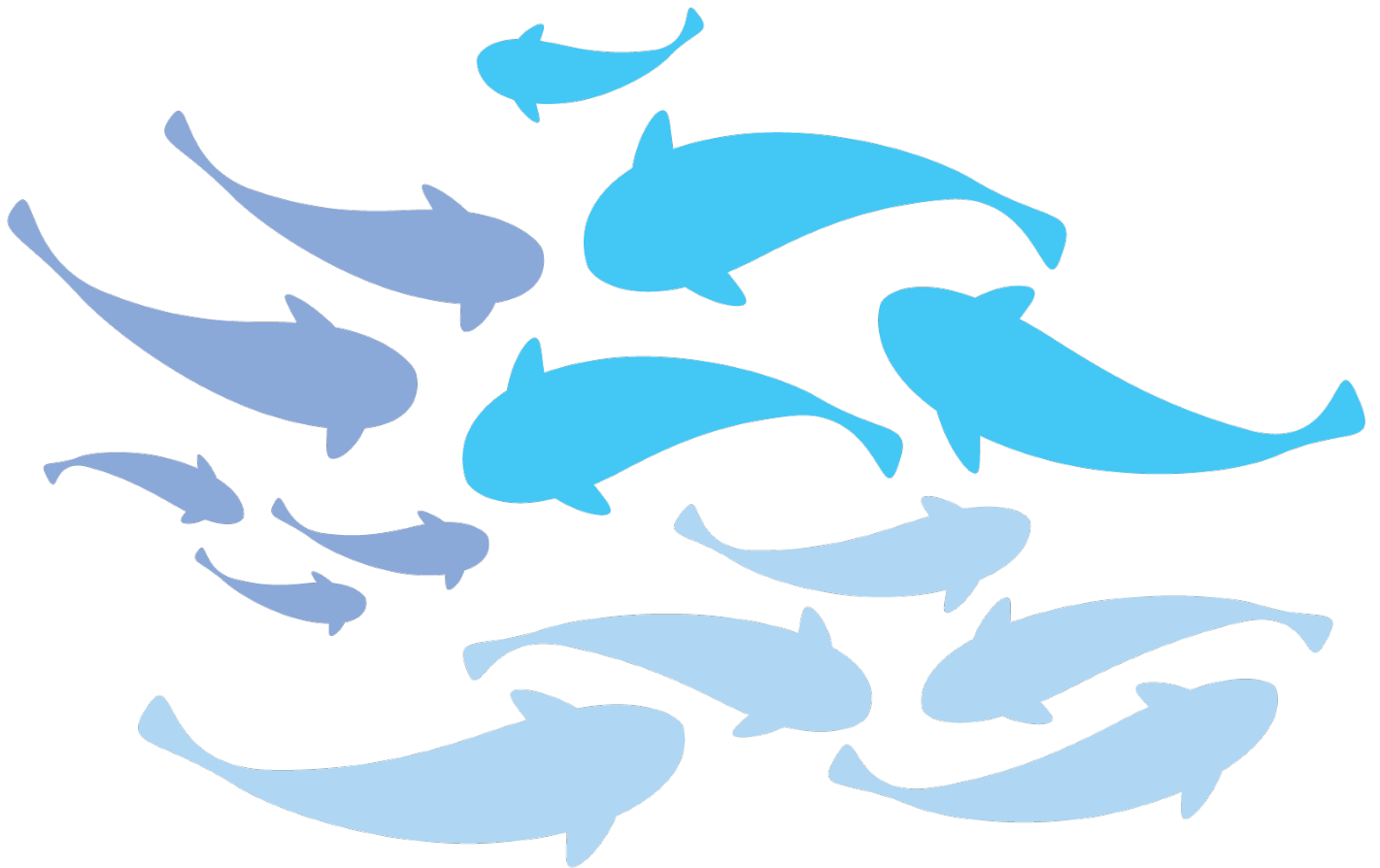


NOAA
FISHERIES

NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Region

Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan



Executive Summary

NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Region, which includes the Alaska Regional Office (AKRO) and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), endeavors to equitably serve all Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Indigenous groups, and stakeholders in our stewardship of marine and anadromous fisheries, marine ecosystems, protected resources, habitats, and aquaculture for which NOAA Fisheries has regulatory responsibility for management. The Alaska Region Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan uses guidance set forth in NOAA Fisheries' *national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#)* to incorporate and prioritize equity and environmental justice (EEJ) into our ongoing and future activities, to the extent consistent with existing applicable law. This plan is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

NOAA defines equity¹ as "the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment." It defines environmental justice^{2,3} as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, tribal affiliation, religion, disability, or income during the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, including but not limited to:

- Equitable protection from environmental and health hazards
- Equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices
- Equitable opportunity and access to decision-making processes for underserved communities

The U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off Alaska comprises nearly 1.5 million square nautical miles, with 33,904 miles of coastline. The region includes sub-Arctic waters in the Gulf of Alaska and south of the Aleutian Islands and Arctic waters north of the Aleutian Islands, eastern Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea, and Beaufort Sea. These waters are home to both the largest fisheries and some of the most critically endangered marine mammal populations in the nation. Alaska has a rich and diverse commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing heritage.

Alaska comprises some of the most remote and rural communities in the nation, scattered across vast tracts of undeveloped land and separated by challenging topographical features. Alaska produces more than half the fish caught in U.S. coastal waters, with an average first wholesale value of nearly \$4.5 billion a year. Seafood is the core economy for much of coastal Alaska, where fish harvesting and processing often provide the only significant opportunities for private sector employment. Commercial fisheries also provide the largest source of local government revenue in most fishing communities through state and local fish taxes, and property, business, and sales taxes paid by processors, fishermen, and fisheries support sector businesses. Shoreside processors are typically the largest property taxpayer in coastal fishing communities ([Resource Development Council of Alaska](#)). Alaska's marine resources provide jobs and a stable food supply for the nation, while supporting a traditional way of life for Alaska Natives as well as local rural subsistence, recreational, and commercial fishing communities. The region also supports a developing mariculture industry for seaweed and invertebrates.

¹ As defined by [EO 13985](#) and [EO 14091](#).

² Adapted from the [Environmental Protection Agency's](#) definition and [EO 14096](#).

³ Informed by [First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit Principles of Environmental Justice](#).

Alaska has 229 federally recognized tribes representing approximately 40 percent of the federally recognized tribes in the entire nation.⁴ Nearly half of the state’s Native peoples live in 200 Native villages in rural Alaska. [Alaska Native villages](#) often have complex governance structures where several distinct governing bodies perform overlapping governance tasks. Villages may include a city government and a federally recognized tribal government, which may be under the jurisdiction of a borough government. Most Alaska Native villages also have a village corporation formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq.). There are twelve [Alaska Native Regional Corporations](#). It is not unusual for a tribal council member to also serve on city or borough governments and on the village corporation.

NOAA recognizes that more work needs to be done to successfully consult with tribal governments and engage with Alaska Native villages and communities. Tribes are included in this plan because they would benefit from NOAA’s EEJ activities since they are impacted by federal fisheries, research and monitoring, and other actions.

Alaska faces new challenges—large-scale ecosystem changes due to changing ocean temperatures and rapid loss of sea ice with the continued influence of climate change—that greatly impact our work. Since 2020, Chinook and chum salmon runs in the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers have reached historic lows, threatening rural and Indigenous communities’ economic, social, and cultural ways. Two major Alaska fisheries—Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska and snow crab in the Bering Sea—were closed for the first time in response to dramatic resource declines related to two unprecedented marine heatwaves. These fishery closures affected not only fishing communities but also coastal and rural communities across Alaska that process these resources. These closures also have national and global impacts. Shifting commercial fish stocks in the Bering Sea are affecting all those dependent on the marine ecosystem. During these marine heatwaves in both the Gulf of Alaska (2014-2016 and 2019) and the Bering Sea (2014-2019), there were record levels of marine mammal strandings (e.g., ice-associated seals and gray whales) and seabird die-offs—some of which are important subsistence resources. In recent years, new threats are emerging from harmful algal blooms.

These changes have a disproportionate effect on underserved communities that lack resources to fully engage in federal fisheries management. This heightens the importance of equitable data collection and decision-making about marine resources. It is also creating new resource management challenges and raising access rights issues as subsistence, recreational, and commercial species shift distribution. Concerns over equity issues related to some current management measures (e.g., individual fishing quotas (IFQs)) were also shared during NOAA Fisheries–led listening sessions.

In these uncertain times, it is increasingly important to consider competing uses of marine resources and different social, cultural, and economic goals for sustainable resource management, including protection of the long-term health of the ecosystem and continued optimization of fisheries yield.

There was an opportunity offered for public input/comment on this regional EEJ implementation plan. Alaska Native Tribes and communities experience barriers to fair treatment and meaningful involvement in NOAA Fisheries’ work, some of which stem from our own policies and practices. The following concerns were identified by communities during listening sessions and the initial development phase of this draft EEJ implementation plan:

- The need for equitable representation at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
- Antiquated communication technology and the high cost of travel within the state due to limited road systems that make engagement and participation in regulatory processes challenging
- Regulatory hurdles that restrict fishermen’s ability to diversify to take advantage of new fishing opportunities

⁴ This is based on the 2024 list of federally recognized tribes identified by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and is subject to change. More information is available on the [BIA webpage](#).

NOAA Fisheries | Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan

- National Standards that are not reflective of the needs of Alaska Native communities, small boat fisheries, as well as coastal and rural Alaska communities
- The need for more effective use of rulemaking and more responsive management to respond to environmental challenges.
- More timely response to disasters.
- Limited opportunities to establish new co-management agreements to fill voids left by organizations that are no longer operational.
- The need for more direct government-to-government engagement (e.g., state/federal and federal/tribal government)
- Limited awareness of all NOAA Fisheries regional office and science center programs and projects
- Focused effort to provide opportunities for young fishermen to get into the industry (graying of the fleet)
- Support for place-based research
- More support for social science studies and scientists
- Need for more consistent surveys in the Gulf of Alaska and more tagging studies and genetic samples to study wild vs. hatchery salmon stocks
- Tariffs in the markets and other market conditions driving price of fish down
- Acknowledgement that Equity and Environmental Justice ensures everyone has a seat at the table

These needs are captured in the following joint AKRO and AFSC Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan.

This plan is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

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List of Acronyms

- ABL:** Auke Bay Laboratories (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)
- AFSC:** Alaska Fisheries Science Center
- DIR:** Directorate Office, Alaska Fisheries Science Center
- AKRO:** Alaska Regional Office
- BOD:** Board of Directors (Alaska Fisheries Science Center)
- BSAI:** Bering Sea Aleutian Islands
- CDQs:** Community Development Program Quotas
- COMMS:** Communications
- DOC:** Department of Commerce
- EEJ:** Equity and Environmental Justice
- EEJ WG:** A Joint Alaska Fisheries Science Center and Alaska Regional Office working group
- FMA:** Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)
- HCD:** Habitat Conservation Division (Alaska Regional Office)
- IDEA:** Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Team (Alaska Regional Office)
- IARPC:** Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee
- IKTK:** Indigenous Knowledge/Traditional Knowledge
- LKTK:** Local Knowledge/Traditional Knowledge
- MML:** Marine Mammal Laboratory (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)
- MREP:** Marine Resource Education Program
- NMFS:** National Marine Fisheries Service
- NOAA:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- NOAA Fisheries:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service
- OMD:** Operations and Management Division (Alaska Regional Office)
- OMI:** Operations, Management and Information (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)
- PRD:** Protected Resources Division (Alaska Regional Office)
- RA:** Regional Administrator (Alaska Regional Office)
- RACE:** Resource Assessment and Conservation Engineering (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)

About the Alaska EEJ Implementation Plan

The Alaska Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Implementation Plan represents the efforts by NOAA Fisheries to improve the ways in which we equitably serve our Alaska communities. The AKRO and AFSC recognize the importance of integrating EEJ into our work to create greater inclusivity and accessibility to our federal government processes and services. The success of this plan is contingent on leadership support, staff commitment to EEJ, and resource availability. We know that it will take time to achieve this implementation plan and are committed to making progress toward our goals informed by our legislative mandates, our constituents, and the communities we serve.

This plan is a **living document** that will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to ensure it contains recent feedback and addresses evolving Alaska community needs. We welcome Alaska community feedback and suggestions on this plan at any time.

This plan must be implemented consistent with applicable laws and subject to the availability of appropriations.

NOAA Fisheries National EEJ Strategy

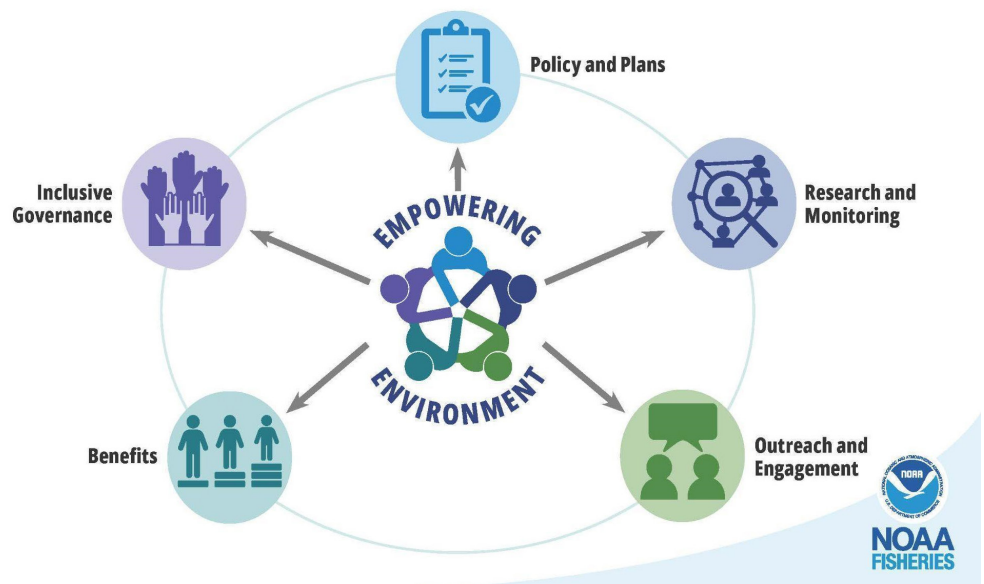
In May 2023, NOAA Fisheries released the [National Equity and Environmental Justice \(EEJ\) Strategy](#) intended to guide the agency to equitably serve all communities in our stewardship of the nation’s ocean resources and their habitat. Regions, science centers, and program offices were directed to develop implementation plans outlining the actions each office would take, specific and responsive to the needs of underserved communities in their region, to advance EEJ.

The National EEJ Strategy identified three overarching goals for the agency:

1. Prioritize identification, equitable treatment, and meaningful involvement of underserved communities
2. Provide equitable delivery of services
3. Prioritize EEJ in our mission work with demonstrable progress

To reach these goals, NOAA Fisheries also identified six core areas to improve (see Figure 1). The Alaska EEJ Implementation Plan identifies region-specific priorities and actions around each core area.

Figure 1. The six core EEJ areas identified in the national strategy



Reporting and Accountability

AKRO and AFSC will jointly provide to the public annual progress reports towards implementation of this Plan, recognizing that many actions have long timeframes and may be constrained by available resources. We will continue

engaging with communities throughout Alaska on our efforts and will share with our partners progress made to this plan and updates on future iterations.

Alignment with Other Strategic Plans

This plan aligns with ongoing strategic planning efforts focused on improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in the NOAA Fisheries workforce, on creating pathways for communities in fisheries work, and on our organization-wide initiatives to advance science and management through an ecosystem-based fisheries management and climate lens, to meet ecosystem objectives in a changing environment. Relevant planning documents include:

- NOAA Fisheries Alaska Geographic Strategic Plan for 2024-2027
- [Alaska Region 2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#)
- [Alaska Fisheries Science Center Strategic Science Plan for 2023-2027](#)
- [Arctic, Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska Regional Action Plans](#) to Implement the NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy through 2024

Initial Engagement Methods for Developing this Plan

In early 2023, AKRO and AFSC formed an EEJ working group (EEJ WG). The group comprises a diverse set of disciplines, including: communications professionals, socio-anthropologists, a tribal research coordinator, a tribal relations coordinator, and leadership team members. The team finalized an Alaska Engagement Plan that incorporates an initial list of underserved communities in Alaska, which it is continuing to develop with broader input from Alaska stakeholders. Outreach to Alaska Native Tribes was prioritized, as Tribes have voiced previous concerns regarding EEJ and will benefit from NOAA's EEJ activities. We are also working internally to engage our own workforce through Town Hall and Tribal Forum presentations, developing a joint consultation protocol with Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, developing cultural awareness training, implementing a research engagement protocol, and establishing internal working groups to promote greater equity and inclusion in our workforce.

The EEJ WG focused on remote, rural villages and small commercial and recreational fishing communities throughout Alaska. These communities are culturally and demographically diverse. Many are mixed-economies, dependent on both commercial and subsistence fishing opportunities. Rural Alaska Native communities engage in complex mixed economies, wherein community members participate in a combination of wild resource subsistence harvest and commercial-wage employment. Mixed economies are adaptive, allowing for adjustment to changing social and environmental conditions. While cash is used for common goods and services (e.g., fuel, heating oil, travel, and housing), it is also used to support active subsistence harvest by purchasing necessary tools such as gear, fishing permits, nets, or ammunition. Bartering systems based on subsistence resource exchange are also extremely important to these communities. A subsistence way of life continues to be vital for daily survival and cultural identity, and has sustained Indigenous peoples for millennia. Alaska Native communities constitute nearly a quarter of Alaska's population. Historically, these communities have been underrepresented in the fisheries management and regional council process even though they can be greatly impacted by fisheries management decisions.

NOAA Fisheries Alaska EEJ WG developed a two-phased external engagement strategy to be implemented in FY 2023 and 2024 for the development of this implementation plan. This work complements ongoing outreach and engagement and social science research already being undertaken by AFSC and AKRO staff. The goal is to improve our service delivery to underserved communities and Indigenous groups to address inequalities that exist and to promote a more culturally aware, socially responsive, and diverse workforce. We want to understand how we can most effectively inform and partner with underserved communities and Alaska Native Tribes and empower them in the fisheries management process and research in Alaska.

In the initial phase, which was conducted May 2023 to March 2024, the team sought broader input to both ensure that it had properly identified Alaska underserved communities and to hear directly from these communities on the best ways to engage and provide information on topics of interest.

We presented information to and hosted conversations among tribal forums and fisheries groups throughout FY 2023. In addition, we hosted nine Town Hall teleconferences with tribal governments and organizations, charter boat operators, and other Alaska constituents. These events were advertised via postings on both NOAA Fisheries and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council websites, and related announcements via our respective listservs and constituent lists, promotion in the popular Alaska Fish notes, Alaska Native News and radio, and newspapers. We also solicited some general written input from the public through December 1, 2024. Finally, the Alaska EEJ WG compiled information on preferred communications methods, the best season or timing for reaching out to these underserved communities, and preferred locations to engage in order to begin planning for Phase 2 of the implementation plan.

During Phase 2, planned for April 2024 through September 2024, team members will conduct in-person regional hub meetings and virtual outreach meetings with interested Indigenous groups, including Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and underserved stakeholder groups to gather further feedback in order to compile and document community needs. The goals of these meetings are to ensure that communities have a voice in the development of this plan and that our efforts are tailored to meet their needs. Feedback from Phase 2 will be incorporated into a future iteration of the implementation plan.

EEJ Objectives Implementation

The Alaska Regional Office and Alaska Fisheries Science Center identified priority actions using the objectives framework of the NOAA Fisheries' national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#). Assessing performance metrics and determining the resources required to implement EEJ activities will be accomplished through community engagement and included in Phase 2. The [DOC EJ Scorecard metrics](#) will be used in this evaluation.

EEJ Regional and Science Center Actions

AKRO and AFSC incorporated community input to identify actions regarding how success will be measured and the resources needed to advance our work around the six core areas identified in the national EEJ Strategy. These core areas include an empowering environment, policy and plans, research and monitoring, outreach and engagement, equitable distribution of benefits, and inclusive governance.

Empowering Environment

1. An empowering environment provides the institutional support, including training and resources, needed to implement multiple EEJ approaches at NOAA Fisheries. Internal leadership and management have identified EEJ as a top priority and encourage staff to consider EEJ in every aspect of their work. Action areas include:
 - 1A. Leadership champions in EEJ
 - 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions
 - 1C. Build a workforce by securing more staff and expertise for EEJ implementation
 - 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities

AKRO and AFSC have identified a leadership champion to facilitate the integration of EEJ activities into everyday work, in addition to hiring a regional office tribal liaison and a tribal research coordinator, building internal working groups focused on serving our communities better (i.e., Alaska EEJ WG, Regional Tribal Engagement Team, Fisheries Tribal Engagement Team), and improving internal and external coordination to reduce the burden on communities.

To promote an empowering environment for EEJ, AKRO and AFSC used community feedback to link directly to NOAA's actions under each core action provided in Table 1. Examples of current and future actions related to the six core areas are captured in Table 1, with specific details provided in Appendix A. Because this is a living document, these actions can and will evolve over time.

Policy and Planning

2. Policy and planning efforts are designed to ensure our policies promote equal opportunities for all and do not create unintended inequities or unequal burdens for underserved communities.
 - 2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities to better incorporate EEJ principles in policy and planning efforts
 - 2B. Advance EEJ through our participation in the North Pacific Council process

AKRO and AFSC will explore legal mandates and regulations to identify potential opportunities for increased equity to advance EEJ through our participation in the North Pacific Council process.

To further incorporate EEJ into our policies and plans, AKRO and AFSC used the community input and information provided through community feedback to link directly to NOAA's actions provided in Table 1. Linking community feedback to EEJ actions. Examples for current and future actions related to policy and planning are captured in Table 1, with further details provided in Appendix A.

Research and Monitoring

3. Research and monitoring includes identifying underserved communities and their needs, conducting collaborative research, and assessing impacts of management decisions. Action areas include:
 - 3A. Establish and build relationships to improve incorporation of EEJ in research and monitoring
 - 3B. Identify and apply best practices to co-develop, co-create, and share research that is meaningful to communities
 - 3C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change
 - 3D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products

AKRO and AFSC have incorporated EEJ into our research and monitoring by establishing and building relationships to improve EEJ in research and monitoring, using social science to better define fisheries benefits to communities and gain a better understanding of climate change impacts, and exploring ways to improve our research through the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge.

Table 1. Linking Community Feedback to EEJ Actions

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
Empowering Environment	Improve cultural knowledge of NOAA Fisheries staff	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ
	Train NOAA Fisheries staff so they understand how to navigate cross-culturally and are able to more effectively interact	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities
	Improve internal federal coordination to avoid community burden through over-engagement	1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities
	Improve communication, engagement, consultation, and follow-through by agency staff	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities
	Respect Indigenous Knowledge as a form of best available science, such as Alaska Native Traditional Knowledge and Local Knowledge and expertise, and learn best ways for incorporation	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation
	Provide leadership and guidance to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to ensure historically underserved and affected communities can meaningfully engage in the process and influence management outcomes	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities 2B. Advance EEJ through our participation in the council process
	Urgent need to increase capacity at NOAA Fisheries in Alaska Region by hiring more tribal liaisons, social scientists, and experts in Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge and co-production of that knowledge	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
	Learn how best to integrate Indigenous Knowledge such as Alaska Native Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Local Knowledge in federal decision-making	2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation 2B. Advance EEJ through our participation in the council process
Research and Monitoring	Include local communities in research projects and management decisions, including locally relevant reciprocity protocols, identify projects of local concern/interest and needs Invest in tribally led research Co-create opportunities for research	3A. Establish and build relationships to improve incorporation of EEJ in research and monitoring 3B. Identify and apply best practices to co-develop, co-create, and share research that is meaningful to communities
	Increase NOAA’s capacity for social scientists and tribal liaisons and traditional and local knowledge to support human dimensions research, and particularly the impact of fisheries management and federal entities on fishing and Indigenous communities	3C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to the human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change
	Bring Indigenous and Local Knowledge into research; reflect community perspectives	3D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products
	Support capacity building and opportunities for local place-based work and tribally led research	3D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products
	Stronger sociological research assessing impacts of fisheries management programs on Native communities and incorporate this into decision making Elevation of social science to parallel biological sciences in decision making	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities 3C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to the human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
	<p>NOAA development expertise to really “know” each fishery-dependent community and how their decisions affect them</p> <p>Discuss opportunities for applied Indigenous and Local Knowledge/scientific research</p> <p>Consult Alaska Native communities about research</p> <p>Better data support for community-led initiatives from NOAA scientists</p> <p>Incorporate principles of co-production in design and implementation of research objectives</p>	<p>1A. Leadership champions EEJ</p> <p>1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions</p> <p>1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation</p> <p>1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities</p> <p>3A. Establish and build relationships to improve incorporation of EEJ in research and monitoring</p> <p>3B. Identify and apply best practices to co-develop, co-create, and share research that is meaningful to communities</p> <p>3C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to the human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change</p> <p>3D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products</p>
<p>Outreach and Engagement</p>	<p>Lack of NOAA staff presence in communities</p> <p>Identify pathways of engagement with Indigenous and coastal communities</p>	<p>4A. Refine and expand best practices for communication and engagement</p> <p>4B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are)</p>
	<p>Improve communication, knowledge sharing, and engagement with communities and partners, and consider what the benefits of engagement are to the target communities, and don’t assume you know what communities want, ask them</p>	<p>4A. Refine and expand best practices for communication and engagement</p> <p>4B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are, early and consistent engagement and improve timely response and follow-up by NOAA staff)</p> <p>4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices</p>

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
	Host in-person culturally appropriate meetings to have inclusive conversations with Alaska communities	4A. Refine and expand best practices for communication and engagement 4B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are, early and consistent engagement and improve timely response and follow-up by NOAA staff)
	Provide sufficient, timely, and accessible information in plain language	4A. Refine and expand best practices for communication and engagement 4B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are, early and consistent engagement and improve timely response and follow-up by NOAA staff)
	Better utilize easily accessible sources of information and multi-modes to solicit and gather feedback (e.g., regional contacts, telephone calls, websites, radio stations, local newspapers, social media)	4B. Continue to apply best practices for communication and engagement by meeting with communities where they are, providing early and consistent engagement as well as improve timely response and follow-up by NOAA staff
	Provide education and internship opportunities for students from underserved communities	4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices
	Provide training on navigating the federal application processes	4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices
	Hire youth interns/cultural rangers to build Traditional and local Knowledge databases within rural communities (pair with The Nature Conservancy EVOS program)	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 4D. Continue to develop and support internship programs for underserved communities
	Provide how-to training and application assistance for tribal communities, small-boat fishermen on navigating the fish permitting system (i.e, halibut and sablefish) and other programs	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices

D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities

National EEJ Empowering Environment Actions: 7, 12

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator/BOD/R A	1. Coordinate NOAA line office activities with communities and other federal agencies	NOAA line office EEJ efforts linked to IARPC, Alaska Regional Collaboration Team, Alaska Marine Mammal Co-Management, and others	Number of briefings or engagements with leadership focused on federal activity coordination	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-5 years
AFSC BOD/AKRO RA/EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator & AKRO Comms Coordinator	2. Annual virtual strategic Communication meetings (3)	Supports updating of best practices for outreach efforts and accountability for our EEJ efforts	Number of meetings to assess how NOAA Fisheries is doing with implementation of its Alaska EEJ Implementation	Annually
ALL	3. Improve coordination with nationally based federal agency partners to increase awareness of AFSC and AKRO community concerns and prioritize locally based relationships	Alaska underserved communities are considered in national discussions and decision-making	Broader recognition of Alaska community priorities at the national level	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-5 years
ALL	4. Improve federal EEJ coordination between AKRO/AFSC, across NOAA Fisheries and NOAA, NPFMC, and other federal agencies as well as the Alaska Department of Fish and Game	Increases internal coordination and capacity so as to reduce community burden and confusion of projects working in silos or at cross purposes	Number of intra- and inter-agency EEJ coordination meetings	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-7 years
ALL/EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator & AKRO Communications Coordinator	5. Increase collaboration and communication across staff members to achieve EEJ and project goals. Share best practices for effective communication, understanding of local priorities and needs, and leveraging existing relationships with local constituents	Increases internal coordination so as to reduce community burden and confusion of projects working in silos or at cross purposes, and increases communication regarding EEJ issues	Increase in the % of projects that include internal debrief in the project cycle; number of place-based projects that involve or make local staff aware of project coordination Annual meeting to share successes and failures in implementing EEJ	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-5 years

C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and Fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change

National EEJ Research and Monitoring Actions: 2, 3, 6, 8

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	1. Develop and improve social science and EEJ section of impact assessments and other applied science products such as Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports, and Fishery Ecosystem Plans	Impact of management on underserved communities is better included in management decisions	Number of EEJ sections or embedded references to community impacts in science and management products Number of management products that incorporate non-economic fisheries benefits research	1-3 years and ongoing
REFM/SFD	1a. Conduct research that allows for characterization and quantification of non-economic benefits of fisheries to the full diversity of fishing communities and people participating in federal fisheries (i.e., not just fishermen) to ensure that policies and regulations are applied equitably among all fishery participants	Integrates benefits of fishing to underserved communities, and a more complete understanding of stakeholders into management	Number of social science products on these topics	1-5 years and ongoing
REFM/SFD	1b. Develop criteria and method for defining and identifying underserved communities in Alaska	Supports all EEJ analysis	Report or manuscript published	1-2 year
REFM	2. Produce an annual report focusing on fishing communities dependent on or substantially engaged in the North Pacific groundfish and crab fisheries (Annual Community Engagement and Participation Overview (ACEPO)); and develop <u>place-based social and economic well-being indicators</u> for Gulf of Alaska fishing communities linked to local marine ecosystems	Improves management decisions and potential impacts on fishing community well-being, consistent with the MSA and NS8 for implementation of fisheries management actions	Annual report; produce a public friendly resource Link to <u>social indicator map</u>	Ongoing
REFM	3. Support for social science research to explore upward mobility and access in Alaska fisheries with an aging demographic	Improves communication needs and potential impacts of fishery management decisions on fishing community well-being and opportunities for young fishermen, consistent with the MSA and NS8 for implementation of fisheries management actions	Published paper	Completed

D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products

National EEJ Research and Monitoring Actions: 1, 2, 3, 4

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	<p>1a. Adapt NOAA guidance on incorporating Indigenous Knowledge to be regionally specific for Alaska</p> <p>1b. Coordinate with NPFMC to incorporate LKTK onramps into NMFS and Council processes for policy and management planning</p> <p>1c. Include considerations of dominant approaches and how to bridge worldviews and improve dialogue</p>	<p>Identifies regionally specific LKTK and local knowledge approaches and determines a strategy for incorporating LKTK in NOAA Fisheries' decision-making documents</p> <p>Management process is more inclusive</p>	<p>Guidance tools adapted to Alaska and community needs with EEJ perspective</p> <p>Number of identified pathways to integrate LKTK into policy and management decisions</p>	1-3 years
ALL	<p>2. Integrate Indigenous and local knowledge into science products and management decisions and document analyses (e.g., NEPA, ESRs, ESPs) and discuss ways to get community input for management ideas and feedback</p>	<p>Brings LKTK into products and analyses</p> <p>Research and management process is more inclusive</p>	<p>Number of identified pathways to integrate LKTK into science that supports management decisions</p> <p>Number of scientific products that integrate LKTK</p>	1-3 years
REFM/SFD	<p>2a. Engage with the local fishing communities to better understand stock structure and reproductive ecology of managed species and impacts of climate change on these species and fishing communities</p>	<p>Brings LKTK and local ecological knowledge into products and analyses</p>	<p>Include section on LKTK in NEPA document</p>	Ongoing
PRD	<p>2b. Practice more inclusive use and incorporation of LKTK in NOAA Fisheries' supporting scientific and management documents (e.g., species status reviews, biological reports, 5-year reviews, recovery plans) related to protected species management work.</p>	<p>Brings LKTK into products and analyses</p>	<p>Number of supporting documents that include LKTK</p>	Ongoing
ALL/REFM	<p>3. Science and social science staff to participate and lead efforts through the NPFMC to integrate LKTK into management products</p>	<p>Brings LKTK into products and analyses</p>	<p>Number of task force meetings and products produced through these efforts</p>	Ongoing

B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are)

National EEJ Outreach and Engagement Actions: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AFSC RACE/MML /ABL/AFSC Communications	1. Increase in-person engagements with all NOAA Fisheries stakeholders in communities where our surveys deploy and return, when possible	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them	Number of in-person engagement with NOAA Fisheries stakeholders; number of stakeholders/participants reached	Ongoing
AKRO	1. Increase in-person and virtual engagement with Indigenous groups in underserved communities where management actions have greater impacts to these communities	Underserved communities have more opportunity to engage with agency staff to share concerns and develop solutions to management actions that may have negative impacts while emphasizing management actions that have beneficial impacts to Native communities	Number of in-person and virtual engagement meetings/sessions with Indigenous groups in underserved communities; number of underserved communities reached	Ongoing and expand 1-3 years
EEJ WG/ALL	1a. Recognize challenges of reaching rural communities by more effective use of appropriate technologies (e.g., telephone calls, local newspapers and radio and regional contacts/communications networks, Facebook)	Underserved communities have better access to science and management by enabling NOAA Fisheries engagement through more diverse, culturally appropriate venues or forums	Creation of a shareable list of local newspapers, radio stations, and community event forums for posting on AKRO and AFSC intranet	1-2 year
ALL	1b. Create informal engagement opportunities for scientists and managers to build trust directly with Indigenous and underserved communities over time, and preferably not in a time of conflict or crisis. Focus on building lines of communication with groups that have not historically been included in research	Relationship building with Indigenous groups including regulated and/or underserved communities	Reported improved relationship between scientists, managers, and communities	Ongoing
ALL	2. Increase transparency of NOAA Fisheries science and management by inviting local commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishermen to NOAA Fisheries offices to showcase what we do (e.g, Kodiak, Juneau, Unalaska, Little Port Walter)	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them	Number of underserved community visitors	Ongoing

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AFSC & AKRO Communications/ ALL	3. Explore and implement additional opportunities to expand outreach and education to underserved communities throughout Alaska through educational events including but not limited to Sea Week, Juneau (1970-present); Bering Sea Days, St. Paul Island (2010-2019); Barrow Arctic Research Center (BARC) Science Fair, Utqiagvik; Curiosity Unleashed, Juneau; Juneau School District Family STEAM events; Native Village of Solomon Outreach event; Sitka Whalefest, Belugas Count	Relationship building and raised awareness of NOAA Fisheries in Alaska	Number of engagement activities with underserved communities Number of attendees in each engagement Number of underserved communities represented at each engagement	1-2 year and ongoing
AFSC Communications/ AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator	4. Support virtual learning opportunities through in-classroom webinars (e.g., NOAA Live Alaska, Facebook Live events) to reach rural communities featuring scientists and Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge holders sharing information on Alaska marine ecosystems	Builds relationships with local communities; exposes students to different ways of knowing	Number of webinars that incorporate STEAM and Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge	Ongoing
SFD	5. Increase early outreach efforts to provide information sharing with the fishing community in accessible and culturally appropriate formats on rules and regulations. This includes translations for two-pager	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of science and management that affects them	Number of engagement activities to share fishing rules and regulations with fishing community Number of locations where accessible materials are available for fishing community Number of resources translated	Ongoing
ALL	6. Provide plain language and translation and interpretation of materials and presentations where needed and appropriate	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of science and management that affects them	Culturally and linguistically appropriate services provided to Alaska communities	Ongoing
SFD	6a. Develop language-accessible protected species interaction training for pelagic and bottom trawl and longline fishing crew and seafood processing plant workers that includes translations, interpretation, and accessible resources	Provides for increased understanding of federal requirements by fishermen and seafood processing plant workers, including foreign language-speaking participants in the fishery	Number of crew with limited English proficiency reached Number of trainings held with language access Number of resources and materials translated	2-4 years

C. Improve access to education and technical training programs for underserved communities

National EEJ Outreach and Engagement Actions: 5, 7, 8, 11

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AKRO RA/AFSC DIR-OMI	1. Provide training for communities on how to navigate federal application systems, including grant and NEPA training	Increased access to federal applications systems to underserved communities	Number of people trained from underserved communities	Ongoing
AFSC Communications/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator	2. Continue to support NOAA Science Camp scholarship program for underserved communities	Provides opportunities for campers to learn about NOAA research and student and career opportunities	Number of middle and high school students participating from underserved communities	2003 to present
FMA/AFSC BOD/AKRO RA/SFD	3. Support the development and continuation of the Marine Resources and Education Program (MREP) in Alaska	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them, and are better able to engage. IK is included	Number of trainings and activities supported for MREP	2023, 2024 Ongoing
OMD/OMI	4. Establish a targeted recruitment plan for underrepresented students including expanding existing internship and fellowship program opportunities (across Alaska) and have dedicated funding for this	Removal of barriers for underserved community members to apply and participate in internship and fellowship programs	Increased representation of underserved communities in internships and fellowship programs Number of new recruitment strategies deployed for underrepresented students	1-2 years
ALL	4a. Actively maintain a list of shovel-ready projects for potential future interns, especially from the Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI)	Increased career opportunities for underserved communities	Increase in number of students from underserved communities participating in internships and projects	Ongoing
OMI/OMD/AFSC Communications	4b. Expand student internships and project opportunities to smaller, resource-limited institutions and other organizations (e.g., Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program Summer Bridge Internship, North Pacific Research Board Internship Pilot, Inclusive NOAA Fisheries Internship (IN FISH) Program, NOAA Educational	Provides some opportunities for students in Alaska to remain there, and would allow interns who are already working to keep their jobs (and their associated benefits, seniority, income, etc.) Increased career opportunities for underserved communities	Increase in number of students from underserved communities participating in internships and projects	Ongoing

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
	<p>Partnership Program with Minority-Serving Institutions</p> <p>Alaska Sea Grant Community-Engaged Internship; Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) Summer Internships - High School; University of Washington Cooperative Institute for Climate, Ocean and Ecosystem Studies (CICOES) Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Internship Program; and University of Chicago Metcalf Program</p> <p>Have a physical presence at these institutions when advertising positions to have in-person interaction with students and faculty</p>			
ALL	4c. Find ways to promote NOAA as a career opportunity for students with local cultural knowledge, including formal internship programs or partnerships with secondary schools, community colleges, and universities	Increased career opportunities for underserved communities	Increase in number of students from underserved communities participating in internships and projects	Ongoing
AFSC Communications Program/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator/ALL	5. Develop culturally responsive curriculum with community members and educators	Culturally responsive practices in the classroom increase student engagement, motivation, sense of belonging, and strengthen student identities, reading comprehension, and mathematical thinking. Strengthen our own understanding of local cultures and traditions and fosters NOAA-community partnerships	<p>Number of new curriculums developed</p> <p>Number of Alaska classrooms using the curriculum</p>	Ongoing

5. Equitably Distribute Benefits

A. Improve access and remove barriers to federal government resources

National EEJ Benefits Actions: 1, 2, 3, 5

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	1. Incorporate EEJ considerations into resource allocation decision-making to improve equitable distribution, to the extent consistent with applicable law	Increased equity in distribution of benefits	Number of EEJ considerations incorporated into resource allocation decision-making	1-2 years and ongoing
EEJ WG/EEJ Coordinator/Communications Teams/ALL	2. Develop a mechanism to remove barriers for underserved community members to participate in federal meetings and programs (e.g., use telephone conference calls, mailings, compressed PDFs)	Increased access to federal meeting and programs for underserved communities	% of meetings held that include culturally appropriate incentives Number of meetings that use communications modes that recognize technology limitations of rural Alaska	1-2 years
RA/BOD OMD/OMI	3. Develop a process for contracting local businesses and community members for their services including for printed materials, invited speakers, culturally appropriate trainings and meetings. Work through NOAA AGO to collaborate with the DoC/NOAA Small Business Team	Supports small local businesses and economies Supports relationships between NMFS and communities	Contracting process created and increase in collaborative relationships	1-2 years
OMD/OMI	4. Remove barriers and identify solutions to increase purchase card actions with local vendors, small businesses, and businesses from underserved communities	Procurement contracts available to local businesses and community members	Increased number of procurement actions with local vendors, small businesses, and businesses from underserved communities	1-3 years
OMD/OMI	5. Identify underserved communities, biases, and limitations in the federal financial assistance program and develop processes to remove barriers to access	Increased accessibility of financial assistance program to underserved communities	Increase in number of successful applicants from underserved communities in the federal financial assistance program	1-3 years

6. Inclusive Governance

A. Establish and build relationships to improve inclusive decision-making

National EEJ Inclusive Governance Actions: 1, 2,4

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	1. Support and facilitate Alaska representation on regional, national, and international advisory bodies	Increase representation of Alaska fishing communities in decision-making	Increase in % of Alaska representatives on regional, national, and international advisory bodies	Ongoing
AKRO	1a. Continue to elevate the importance of diverse representation on NPFMC to Secretary of Commerce and State of Alaska, specifically encourage appointment of an Indigenous community member to the Council	Advance EEJ through our participation and incorporation of EEJ in science and management through the Council Process	At least one Indigenous community member appointed to the Council	Ongoing
PRD/SFD/HCD	2. Meaningfully involve Indigenous and underserved groups in the regulatory process, where feasible, and especially early in the preparation process	Reduce or eliminate the appearance of arbitrary and noninclusive decisions	% of regulatory processes that include early engagement with Indigenous or underserved groups	Ongoing
PRD	3. Establish new co-management agreements (e.g., interest expressed in Kodiak/SE Alaska with loss of harbor seal co-management org)	Increase representation of Alaska Indigenous communities in decision-making about subsistence resources	New agreement established; secure additional funding; number of meetings held	3 years/ Needs future funding

B. Improve opportunities for inclusive governance in public processes

National EEJ Inclusive Governance Actions: 1,4, 7

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
EEJ WG	1. Develop a plan to make public meetings and hearings more accessible. This includes creating space for informal engagement and accessible locations and platforms for local translations	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of science and management that affects them	Plan developed and utilized for public meetings and hearings	1-3 years
AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator	2. Establish a steering committee/advisory group for research	Improved opportunities for inclusive governance in public processes Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them	Increase in-person meetings with underserved communities and opportunities for active input and understanding of tribal perspectives	3 years
SFD/PRD/HCD	3. Improve accessibility and equity in rules and regulations by: Seeking and considering views and input from affected communities in rulemaking through engagement and consultation, consistent with applicable laws and guidance Increasing opportunities for underserved communities to provide comments on rulemaking packages, consistent with applicable laws and guidance Creating two-pager summary guides for proposed rules with regulatory changes, and providing translated materials as appropriate	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of science and management that affects them; assist in incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge	% of rule and regulation packages that incorporate EEJ best practices	Ongoing