

**VALLEY CLEAN ENERGY ALLIANCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Staff Report - Item 14

TO: Valley Clean Energy Board of Directors

FROM: Mitch Sears, Interim General Manager
Rebecca Boyles, Director of Customer Care and Marketing

SUBJECT: Review and Adopt the Draft Statement on Environmental Justice

DATE: October 10, 2020

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Review the incorporated changes in the Draft Statement on Environmental Justice; and
2. Adopt the Draft Statement.

BACKGROUND

In June 2020, the VCE Board of Directors appointed a Board Working Group to work with staff to develop a Draft Statement on Environmental Justice issues. The Draft Statement has been reviewed by the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Board twice, and the CAC has recommended that the Board adopt the Statement after it has been modified to include feedback from the September 24th, 2020 CAC meeting. The attached Draft Statement includes these modifications, and staff requests that the Board formally adopt the Statement on Environmental Justice.

The feedback provided by the CAC at the September 24th, 2020 meeting included 1) adding the official EPA definition of Environmental Justice to the Statement and 2) modifying the phrase “historically marginalized communities” to “emerging and historically marginalized communities.”

The official EPA definition on Environmental Justice (EJ) is: *“the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies¹.”*

The definition has been added to the Statement to provide clarity on VCE’s definition of Environmental Justice, to demonstrate that our definition of EJ includes climate and racial justice, and to standardize the language with which we refer to EJ issues. Staff also recommends that we refer to the Working Group as the “Environmental Justice Working Group” instead of the “Environmental and Social Justice Working Group” going forward to maintain consistency in language.

The CAC and VCE staff recommend that the Board review these changes and officially adopt the Draft Statement on Environmental Justice.

Attachment

1. Draft Statement on Environmental Justice issues

Attachment 1 – Draft of Valley Clean Energy’s Statement on Environmental Justice

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>

Valley Clean Energy (VCE) is a mission-driven community-based not-for-profit public electricity supplier serving nearly 90% of the electricity customers in unincorporated Yolo County and the cities of Woodland, Davis, and Winters. We supply cost-competitive clean electricity to everyone who chooses our service, regardless of race, gender, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identification, nationality, religion or political views. We were established to achieve better outcomes for the customers and communities we serve and are therefore stronger and more effective when the full range of customer voices we serve are reflected in our decisions.

Valley Clean Energy recognizes that Environmental Justice (EJ) issues are deeply ingrained in our society. This includes the energy sector, where VCE can have a role in directly addressing energy-related inequities many people in under-resourced or disadvantaged communities face. This time of broad awakening across our country challenges us to respectfully acknowledge our role in truly effecting better outcomes for all of the communities and customers we serve.

We acknowledge that historically not all customers have had equitable access to the decisions that shape and affect their communities. We will do our part to ensure that the decisions we make about energy supply and community reinvestment help to further Environmental Justice.

VCE has adopted the official definition of Environmental Justice from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is: *“the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies².”*

Valley Clean Energy is committed to supplying more electricity that is produced by renewable, non-polluting sources such as solar, wind and hydroelectric. We are also committed to identifying and improving our systems that could perpetuate institutional barriers. To this end, VCE has made these commitments to further encourage diversity, equity and inclusion:

- We will listen, learn and act.
- We will explicitly integrate and address the concerns and priorities of emerging and historically marginalized communities in the design and implementation of VCE’s services and programs – to ensure that *all* of our customers are well served.
- We will work alongside our sister agencies in the Environmental Justice and Equity Committee of the Community Choice Energy trade association (CalCCA) to develop programs and policies that reduce environmental harm in all California communities – especially those with a history of environmental injustice.
- We will invite a more diverse set of voices to the table to effectively advance environmental justice in low-income and disadvantaged communities (DACs). We will reach out to DACs through targeted outreach campaigns to more thoroughly involve them in VCE workshops, program design and meetings of the Board of Directors and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC).
- We will more deeply integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion in our internal hiring, promotion, leadership (Board and CAC) and contracting policies.

² <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>

Confronting the current challenges of environmental justice requires authentic and sustained listening. To that end, we would like to extend the invitation to more deeply engage all members of our community – especially those whose voices have not yet have been fully represented. Please share your feedback, concerns and ideas at our [Board](#) and Community Advisory Committee meetings. All meetings are open to the public. And please consider contributing your expertise to VCE as a member of the Community Advisory Committee. Applications are available [here](#) -- and meeting schedules are available [here](#).