

REJOICE Pandemic
Recovery Project:
Preliminary Findings and
Recommendations

Rural Environmental
Justice Opportunities
Informed by Community
Expertise

June through December 2020



REJOICE Project:

Rural Environmental Justice Opportunities Informed by Community Expertise

2018-2022

Watch a live recording and Q&A [here](#).



R.E.J.O.I.C.E. Project 2020 - Please share slides with attribution

Who Are We?

Center for Whole Communities

Community Action Works

University of Vermont

Vermont Law School

CVOEO Mobile Home Project



CENTER FOR WHOLE
COMMUNITIES

**ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE CLINIC**

Vermont Law School



Methodology

- Engaged community leaders, liaisons, and interpreters to co-design and co-facilitate focus groups via Zoom and by phone
- Compensated partners and participants
- Provided targeted health and economic information
- Asked open-ended environmental and quality-of-life questions
- Committed to checking our findings with partners and communities



A pre-COVID community conversation in Newport, Vermont.

Focus Groups

17 focus groups, 77 participants

- Bhutanese Nepali Elders & Parents
- Deaf & Hard of Hearing Community
- Migrant Farmworkers
- Mobile Home Communities
- People With Disabilities
- Rural Communities
- Seniors
- Somali Bantu Elders & Parents

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

JOIN REJOICE FOR A CONVERSATION ABOUT YOUR COVID-19 EXPERIENCE

What: an informal conversation about your experience with pandemic relief and recovery.

When: on Tuesday, 10/20, 6-7:30pm, by video and audio call.

How: the first eight people to sign up will participate and receive \$50 for their time. Sign up by calling the CVOEO Mobile Home Program at 802-660-3455 ext 204 by 12pm on Monday, October 19.

Who: The REJOICE Partnership is the group organizing this meeting. We are teachers, community leaders, and policy advisors who want to better understand how the pandemic has affected environmental and health problems across Vermont.

Why: We hope the information you share will be used to change how the government and nonprofit groups respond to emergencies and inequality in the future. You have the power to make decisions and fight injustice in your state!

The REJOICE Project: Rural
Environmental Justice Opportunities
Informed by Community Expertise



Our goal is to produce evidence-based accounts of environmental justice in Vermont.

What are the key environmental and health issues of concern to frontline communities? How do ethnoculturally diverse and low-income communities identify, prioritize, and integrate health and ecological concerns?

What are the challenges to access, inclusion, and participation in state environmental and land use policy? How do these challenges contribute to existing environmental health issues?

What factors contribute to structural racism in Vermont, and thus contribute to environmental justice issues?

Focus Group Questions

- Environmental and health issues of concern in your community
- Pandemic response measures that have been helpful or unhelpful
- Challenges to accessing:
 - ◆ Information and resources about the pandemic, online or in your own language
 - ◆ Shelter and neighborhood safety
 - ◆ Adequate medical care
 - ◆ Health and safety at work
 - ◆ Nutritious food and necessary supplies
- Issues you are most worried about right now
- One thing you'd ask the government to change in the pandemic response

Read the REJOICE 2020 reports here:

www.environmentaljusticevt.org

What is Environmental Justice Policy?

Equal access to...

Clean Air

Clean Water

Outdoor Recreation

Healthy Homes

Health Care

Fresh Food

SUBSTANTIVE

Enhancing...

Public Participation

Access to Information

Language Access

PROCEDURAL

Ensuring...

No discrimination based on
race, national origin,
disability or income

Equal distribution of
environmental burdens and
benefits

DISTRIBUTIVE

WHAT DOES S.148 DO?

Sets an Environmental Justice Policy

- ❑ No segment of the population of the State should, because of its racial, cultural, or economic makeup, bear a disproportionate share of environmental benefits or burdens

Defines “EJ Populations”

- ❑ Based on race, low income, and limited English proficiency
- ❑ Definitions for “Environmental Justice” and “Meaningful Participation” were developed through a participatory process led by VT Renews BIPOC Council

Commits Targeted Spending in EJ Populations

- ❑ Commits the state to spending at least 55 percent of environmental, renewable energy, climate mitigation, transportation, and climate resilience funds in designated EJ populations

WHAT DOES S.148 DO?

Establishes an EJ Advisory Council & Interagency Council

- ❑ Advisory Council comprised of community members from EJ Populations

Commits State to Building an EJ Mapping Tool

- ❑ Tool should be useful to communities and agencies to aid in information sharing

Establishes Date for Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

- ❑ All State Agencies must develop meaningful Community Engagement Plans

Title VI in the Environmental Context

Title VI provides:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity administered by a recipient of federal funds.

- Civil Rights Act of 1964

Principles of Environmental Justice demand:

“The fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self determination of all peoples.”

“The right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation.”

- 17 Principles of EJ: First Nat’l People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, 1991

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