



OEHHA CalEPA Tribal Advisory Committee Report Third Quarter Update October– December 2024

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) is the lead entity within the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) for assessing health risks posed by environmental chemicals.

As part of OEHHA's participation in the TAC, we submit a quarterly report to CalEPA informing Tribes of activities that may be of interest, consultations, and projects. Tribes are welcome to [contact OEHHA](#) at any time with questions or for assistance.

Consultations

Consultations during Q3: 0

Topic(s):

Tribal Activities Update

Highlights of OEHHA activities between October – December 2024 that may be of interest to Tribes come primarily from the following projects:

1. [CalEnviroScreen and DAC Designation](#)
2. [CalHeatScore](#)
3. [HAB-related illnesses](#)
4. [Fish Consumption Advisories](#)
5. [Indicators of Climate Change in California](#)
6. [Pesticide-related Illnesses](#)
7. [Contaminated Site Assessments](#)
8. [Community Science Model](#)
9. [Trainings/Meetings](#)

1. CalEnviroScreen and DAC Designation

OEHHA develops [CalEnviroScreen](#), an environmental justice mapping tool used to identify California communities burdened by multiple sources of pollution and vulnerable to its effects. The last update to CalEnviroScreen was in 2021 with an updated planned for 2025. The forthcoming fifth update to CalEnviroScreen is using a co-design approach through partnerships with environmental justice community-based organizations and interested Tribes who would like to participate.

Tribal engagement efforts for CalEnviroScreen 5.0 are focused on addressing data gaps related to tribal communities. The CalEnviroScreen team is working on documenting and addressing gaps in tribal data, particularly concerning tribal water systems and sites on tribal lands not included in the tool such as hazardous or solid waste sites. OEHHA developed a proposed approach to representing tribal water systems in CalEnviroScreen, shared with the TAC, and are hoping to collaborate with interested Tribes.

SB535 Map Updates

CalEPA uses CalEnviroScreen to designate [disadvantaged communities \(DACs\)](#), which are prioritized for the state's climate investments. Federally recognized tribal lands are designated as DACs. Federally recognized tribes who would like to add additional tribal lands to the map are welcome to consult with OEHHA at any time. The SB535 map for 2024, which incorporated additional Tribal lands, is available [online](#).

2. CalHeatScore

The California Communities Extreme Heat Scoring System ([CalHeatScore](#)) is the prototype of a new online extreme heat tool that launched on December 31st, 2024. The purpose of CalHeatScore is to reduce heat-related illness and save lives by translating meteorological, weather and health data into easy-to-understand heat risk alerts. This tool raises awareness of extreme heat events and empowers parents, seniors, caregivers, and communities to plan for, mitigate, and survive extreme heat events. CalHeatScore is committed to prioritizing the most vulnerable populations and ensuring that everyone has the information they need to stay safe during extreme heat.

As part of ongoing efforts to ensure the tool is accessible and culturally responsive, CalHeatScore launched an initiative to engage Tribes in the public engagement process. In November, OEHHA discussed the tool at the Pala Climate Health Summit, fostering meaningful relationships with the Pala Band of Mission Indians and other Tribes. This engagement is helping develop a more effective plan to integrate Tribal knowledge and priorities into the tool, ensuring that CalHeatScore better serves Tribes in addressing the growing public health threat of extreme heat.

3. HAB-related illnesses

OEHHA investigates and tracks potentially Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB)-related illnesses as part of the [California Interagency HAB-related Illness Workgroup](#). Nearly 10% of all California HAB-related illnesses in humans, domestic animals, and wildlife are associated with Clear Lake. OEHHA regularly engages with Big Valley environmental

protection department to ensure that HAB data are used to benefit both scientific research and the community living around Clear Lake.

HAB-related Illness Workgroup and Cal-WATCH updates

OEHHA, as part of the [California Interagency HAB-related Illness Workgroup](#), participates in and provides regular updates at the [California Cyanobacteria Harmful Algal Bloom](#) (CCHAB) Network meetings. CCHAB meetings are co-chaired by the Big Valley Rancheria Environmental Protection Department (EPD) head, Sarah Ryan, and are open to representatives of other California Tribal communities. OEHHA provides scientific expertise at biweekly meetings as part of the [California Water Assessment of Toxins for Community Health](#) (Cal-WATCH) project, along with Big Valley Rancheria's EPD, to monitor and address ongoing HAB-related drinking water concerns in the Clear Lake community.

4. Fish Consumption Advisories

OEHHA's fish advisories provide "safe eating guidelines" that recommend how often people can safely eat fish caught from California water bodies. They are based on sampling results for persistent chemicals in common fish species that people catch and eat from California water bodies.

The advisories are available at <https://oehha.ca.gov/fish/advisories>.

New Advisories

The development of new fish consumption advisories (FCAs) is underway. The following advisories were released this last quarter:

- [Gold Lake](#)
- [Lake Chabot \(Solano County\)](#)
- [Lake Casitas](#)
- [Modesto Reservoir](#)
- [Lower Putah Creek and Lake Solano](#)
- [Lake Berryessa](#)

The Water Board's Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP), in partnership with California Indian Environmental Alliance (CIEA), offered a tribally-centered [Bioaccumulation Monitoring Training Series](#) in 2024. As part of this series OEHHA presented a course on December 10th, titled "[OEHHA Fish Consumption Advisory Development](#)," which covered an overview of FCAs, sampling and analysis, data evaluation and prioritization, and advisory tissue development. Sherri Norris from CIEA co-facilitated this course and identified important aspects of advisory development for Tribes. The purpose of this course was to provide Tribes with critical information for developing bioaccumulation programs that support the fish advisories.

OEHHA also participates in the following activities:

- Engages in the [Safe to Eat Workgroup \(STEW\)](#), which includes federal, state, regional, and local representatives, and provides guidance on fish tissue sampling efforts for both short-term data gaps and long-term monitoring priorities.

- Assists with the [Consumption Survey Questionnaire for San Francisco Bay Subsistence Fishers](#) to better understand fish consumption among people who feed themselves and families or friends on a regular basis.

The Fish Advisory team hopes to partner with tribes to develop culturally appropriate formats to enhance understanding of fish advisories.

5. Indicators of Climate Change in California

OEHHA is continuing to collaborate with California Tribes on additions and updates for the fifth edition of the Indicators of Climate Change in California report. OEHHA works with California Native American Tribes (both federally and non-federally recognized) and, with their permission, publishes information on the unique impacts that they face from climate change. The unique impacts of climate change on California Tribes were first included in OEHHA's fourth Indicators of Climate Change in California report, which was released in November 2022.

Tribal video series

California Tribes and Climate Change: Voices from the Frontlines

OEHHA is producing a series of videos in which Tribes tell their own climate change stories. Through these videos, OEHHA aims to help amplify Tribal voices and recognize the value of Indigenous knowledge on climate change issues. Conveying this information in a narrative video format alongside information presented in the report is intended to not only make Tribal experiences accessible to a broader audience but also to deepen viewers' personal connection with the topics that are shared. OEHHA has a contract with California State University Sacramento (CSUS) for filming/video production. OEHHA works closely with Tribes throughout the production process to ensure that the final video tells their story in their own words.

The second video, featuring the members of the Big Pine Tribe of the Owens Valley and the Bishop Paiute Tribes, was publicly released and shown at the Pala Climate Health Summit on November 7, 2024.

The third and final video featuring the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe is currently in production. OEHHA and CSUS are in the editing phase, following the guidance of Tribal members regarding storyline and tone.

6. Pesticide-Related Illnesses

OEHHA continues to offer medical education on the health effects of pesticide exposure to health professionals, including those working with Tribes. Tribal engagement in pesticide-related illness prevention focuses on ensuring that tribes have access to relevant information and can participate in discussions on exposure risks. OEHHA's engagement strategy includes ongoing collaboration with Tribes to address concerns related to pesticide exposure.

OEHHA completed the testimonial video, titled "*Tribal Voices – Experiences with Pesticides*," that includes firsthand accounts of pesticide exposure among Tribes in

California. The video centers the voices of Sarah Ryan, Environmental Director for the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Nina Hapner, Director of Environmental Planning and Natural Resources for the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria, and Diania Caudell, a member of the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians and a board member of the California Indian Basket weavers' Association. Narration by Camilo Perez, Pesticides Control Officer for the Quechan Indian Tribe.

With input from the Pesticide Working Group, OEHHA is working on a story map webpage that includes information on pesticide exposure prevention strategies specific to the Tribal lifeways. The story map also includes information on pesticide health effects and resources for clinicians and patients. Of note, the contract between OEHHA and State University of California, Sacramento was completed on December 31, 2024.

Region 9 Conference Attendance

OEHHA presented the Tribal Lifeways Poster during the poster session of the Tribal EPA Region 9 Conference October 22-24 in San Jose, CA. The poster, through the artwork from Tribal artist, Jacky Calanchini, illustrates the Tribal lifeways of California Tribes and points to information on pesticide exposure and prevention. Additionally, OEHHA was able to connect with Camilo Perez, the Pesticides Control Officer for the Quechan Indian Tribe to record the narration for the testimonial video.

7. Contaminated Site Assessments

OEHHA has completed a draft risk evaluation of the potential health impacts to the Cahto Tribe of contaminants found at the Laytonville Rancheria. The risk evaluation was prompted by long-standing concerns expressed by Rancheria residents about contamination from the nearby landfill. The risk evaluation is under review by CalEPA.

8. Community Science Model

OEHHA and CARB are working with community partners and Tribes to develop guidance on community science for CalEPA. Current work is focused on developing guidelines on addressing data sovereignty.

9. Tribal meetings/Trainings

- EPA Region 9 and Tribal EPA Conference attendance.
- Pala Climate Health Summit attendance.
- National Tribal Resilience Data Workgroup (ongoing participation.)
- Tribal Health & Adaptation Peer-Learning Roundtable (ongoing participation.)
- CA Tribal Climate Change Working Group (ongoing participation.)