



OEHHA - CalEPA

Tribal Advisory Committee Report

First Quarter Update

January - March 2025

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 Q1: 0

Tribal Activities Update

Highlights of OEHHA activities between January – March 2025 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. The forthcoming fifth update to CalEnviroScreen is using a co-design approach through partnerships with environmental justice community-based organizations and interested tribes

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 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 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, older adults, 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. As part of a contract between the Department of Land Use, Climate & Innovation and the UCLA Luskin center, tribes were identified as a key group to engage with via a cohort process. These cohorts are focused discussions between tribes, tribal representatives, and OEHHA to learn about how extreme heat impacts Tribes, how they develop resilience to extreme heat, and how the CalHeatScore tool could be used among Tribal Nations. Recruitment for these cohorts has begun and the cohort process will last from June – October 2025. 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 the Big Valley Rancheria

Environmental Protection Department to ensure that HAB data are used to benefit both scientific research and the local community living around or engaging with 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>.

OEHHA Fish Advisory Development Priorities

OEHHA completed data evaluation and [prioritization of water bodies for developing or updating advisories](#). The results of this process were presented at the most recent [Safe to Eat Workgroup \(STEW\) meeting](#). The presentation [slides](#) from the March 26, 2025, meeting are also available for review (results on slide 9).

OEHHA regularly 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. The Fish Advisory team hopes to partner with tribes to develop more culturally accessible resources to enhance education and communication about fish advisories.

5. Indicators of Climate Change in California

OEHHA is continuing to collaborate with 9 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.

Filming and preliminary editing of third video, featuring members of the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe, is currently undergoing formal Tribal approvals. We will be incorporating any final comments and edits from the Tribe in the next several weeks and coming up with a video release plan for this summer and fall which meets their needs.

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.

With input from the Pesticide Working Group, OEHHA continues to develop a story map webpage. This resource will provide pesticide exposure prevention strategies tailored to Tribal lifeways, as well as information on the health effects of pesticides and resources for both clinicians and patients.

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 has been sent to the Tribe. OEHHA and CalEPA would like support from the TAC on engaging with the Tribe moving forward.

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 finalizing a Community Science practitioner guideline for CalEPA and training modules for staff, tribes, and community-based organizations.

9. Tribal Meetings/Trainings

- National Tribal Resilience Data Workgroup (ongoing participation.)
- Tribal Health & Adaptation Peer-Learning Roundtable (ongoing participation.)
- CA Tribal Climate Change Working Group (ongoing participation.)