

Preliminary 2026 Designation of Disadvantaged Communities

Background

The State of California has many policies and programs in place to safeguard our communities from the impacts of climate change and pollution. However, many communities still experience disproportionate burdens. Senate Bill (SB) 535 (De León, Chapter 830, Statutes of 2012) directs the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to designate “disadvantaged communities” (DACs) based on “geographic, socioeconomic, public health, and environmental hazard criteria.”¹ It also mandates that a minimum percentage of Cap-and-Invest auction proceeds, known as California Climate Investments, are targeted toward investments in DACs.

CalEnviroScreen

Developed by CalEPA's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), CalEnviroScreen is a statewide mapping tool that identifies California communities with the highest pollution burdens and vulnerabilities. CalEPA uses CalEnviroScreen to identify DACs, and to better understand and address environmental concerns in California communities. On June 24, 2026, OEHHA released a final version of CalEnviroScreen Version 5.0. For the first time, CalEnviroScreen was updated using a co-design process with eight community-based organizations from the state's most pollution-burdened areas. CalEnviroScreen Version 5.0 includes more recent data, updated census tract geography, improved methodology, and two additional indicators. CalEnviroScreen 5.0 can be accessed [here](#).

DAC Designation Process

CalEPA issued previous DAC designations in 2014, 2017, and 2022. Building on lessons learned from previous designations, CalEPA is proposing to define communities in terms of census tracts and include the following in the 2026 DAC designation:

- 1. Census tracts with the highest 25 percent of CalEnviroScreen 5.0 overall scores.**
- 2. Census tracts with the highest 5 percent of CalEnviroScreen 5.0 pollution burden scores.**
- 3. Census tracts that have at least 25 percent overlap with a 2022 DAC census tract based on CalEnviroScreen 4.0.**
- 4. Lands under the control of federally recognized tribes, with updated tribal boundaries data.**

The full 2026 Preliminary DAC Designation and map are available [here](#).

Public Engagement

The public comment period for the 2026 DAC designation will be open until 5:00 p.m. on August 14, 2026. To submit a public comment, please send your comment to DACinquiries@calepa.ca.gov.

CalEPA is also hosting two virtual public workshops to receive input and feedback. Spanish interpretation and translation of the materials will be available. Workshop details are below:

- Thursday, July 9, 2026, 5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Register [here](#).
- Friday, July 17, 2026, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. Register [here](#).

There will be one virtual Tribal Workshop on the Disadvantaged Communities Designation. The Tribal Workshop is by invite only. Please reach out to TribalAffairs@calepa.ca.gov with questions about the Tribal workshop.

¹ Health and Safety Code § 39711(a).