

Final 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 July 1, 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 defining communities in terms of census tracts and including the following in the Final 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 Final 2026 DAC Designation and map are available [here](#).

Priority Populations

The CalEPA DAC Designation defines the disadvantaged communities included within the broader definition of priority populations for California Climate Investments programs. Priority populations also include low-income communities statewide, the ½ mile area in which low-income communities and households may neighbor CalEPA-defined DACs, and all low-income households anywhere in the state, regardless of location. The updated California Climate Investments Priority Populations map is available online [here](#).

¹ Health and Safety Code § 39711(a).