



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 28, 2013

CONTACT: Alex Barnum
(916) 324-9670

CalEPA Creates New Environmental Justice Working Group

Focus on Compliance in Communities Most Burdened by Pollutants

SACRAMENTO – California Environmental Protection Agency Secretary Matthew Rodriquez today announced the formation of a new agency-wide working group to improve compliance with state environmental laws in California communities most burdened by pollution.

The new Environmental Justice Compliance and Enforcement Working Group, part of an ongoing effort to integrate environmental justice considerations into CalEPA's mission, underscores the Agency's commitment to ensuring that all Californians enjoy a clean and healthy environment.

"This will help ensure that California communities disproportionately affected by pollution are given particular consideration in our efforts to increase compliance with state environmental laws," said Secretary Rodriquez. "It reflects our ongoing commitment to environmental justice and public health protection."

The Working Group will build on agency-wide efforts to coordinate compliance and enforcement by involving the enforcement chiefs from each of CalEPA's five boards and departments. While enforcement is usually carried out by each board and department independently, the Working Group will focus enforcement efforts on multiple types of pollution simultaneously, whether it involves air, water, toxics, solid waste or pesticides.

The Working Group also represents one of the Agency's first applications of CalEnviroScreen, a new science-based tool for identifying California communities most burdened by pollution from multiple sources and most vulnerable to its effects. The Working Group will use CalEnviroScreen to establish priority areas for coordinated compliance and enforcement efforts.

CalEnviroScreen uses data about different types of pollution, combined with environmental and socioeconomic factors, to identify California communities with the highest pollution burdens relative to other areas of the state. Developed by the Agency and the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, CalEnviroScreen was

designed to help state decision makers prioritize limited resources in addressing pollution in the state's most vulnerable communities.

Compliance and enforcement are a particular concern among residents in these communities, said Arsenio Mataka, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs. "When we talk with communities, especially those facing multiple sources of pollution, the issue of enforcement always rises to the top," said Mataka, who is a member of the Working Group. "They want to know, at a minimum, that regulated industries in their communities are following the law."

Tactically, the Working Group will focus on outreach to affected communities and involve them in compliance and enforcement efforts. Working with our local partners, the group will provide opportunities for community stakeholders to express concerns, and will incorporate community input in its efforts to educate regulated business about environmental protection laws.

Members of the Working Group include the enforcement chiefs from the Department of Toxics Substances Control, the Department of Pesticide Regulation, CalRecycle, the Air Resources Board and the State Water Resources Control Board, as well as a representative from the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

Other members include CalEPA's deputy secretary for law enforcement and counsel, the assistant secretary for environmental justice and tribal affairs, and the assistant general counsel for enforcement. Representatives from local environmental law enforcement agencies will also be invited to participate in the Working Group.

Related links:

- [View the CalEnviroScreen report and maps.](#)

###