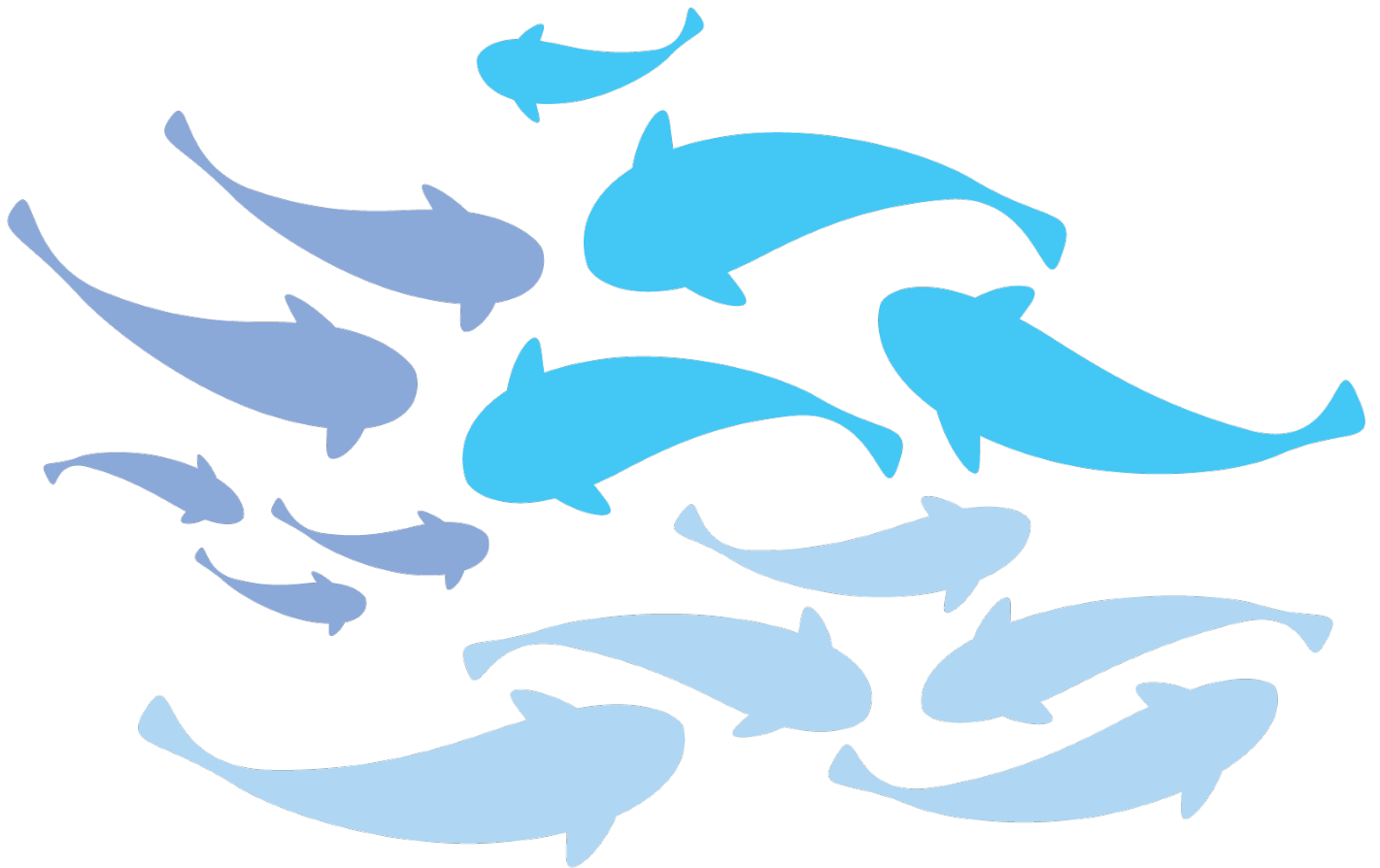


**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**

NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Region

# Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan



# Executive Summary

NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Region, which includes the Alaska Regional Office (AKRO) and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), endeavors to equitably serve all Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, other Indigenous groups, and stakeholders in our stewardship of marine and anadromous fisheries, marine ecosystems, protected resources, habitats, and aquaculture for which NOAA Fisheries has regulatory responsibility for management. The Alaska Region Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan uses guidance set forth in NOAA Fisheries' *national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#)* to incorporate and prioritize equity and environmental justice (EEJ) into our ongoing and future activities, to the extent consistent with existing applicable law. This plan is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

NOAA defines equity<sup>1</sup> as "the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment." It defines environmental justice<sup>2,3</sup> as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, tribal affiliation, religion, disability, or income during the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, including but not limited to:

- Equitable protection from environmental and health hazards
- Equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices
- Equitable opportunity and access to decision-making processes for underserved communities

The U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) off Alaska comprises nearly 1.5 million square nautical miles, with 33,904 miles of coastline. The region includes sub-Arctic waters in the Gulf of Alaska and south of the Aleutian Islands and Arctic waters north of the Aleutian Islands, eastern Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea, and Beaufort Sea. These waters are home to both the largest fisheries and some of the most critically endangered marine mammal populations in the nation. Alaska has a rich and diverse commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing heritage.

Alaska comprises some of the most remote and rural communities in the nation, scattered across vast tracts of undeveloped land and separated by challenging topographical features. Alaska produces more than half the fish caught in U.S. coastal waters, with an average first wholesale value of nearly \$4.5 billion a year. Seafood is the core economy for much of coastal Alaska, where fish harvesting and processing often provide the only significant opportunities for private sector employment. Commercial fisheries also provide the largest source of local government revenue in most fishing communities through state and local fish taxes, and property, business, and sales taxes paid by processors, fishermen, and fisheries support sector businesses. Shoreside processors are typically the largest property taxpayer in coastal fishing communities ([Resource Development Council of Alaska](#)). Alaska's marine resources provide jobs and a stable food supply for the nation, while supporting a traditional way of life for Alaska Natives as well as local rural subsistence, recreational, and commercial fishing communities. The region also supports a developing mariculture industry for seaweed and invertebrates.

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by [EO 13985](#) and [EO 14091](#).

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the [Environmental Protection Agency's](#) definition and [EO 14096](#).

<sup>3</sup> Informed by [First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit Principles of Environmental Justice](#).

Alaska has 229 federally recognized tribes representing approximately 40 percent of the federally recognized tribes in the entire nation.<sup>4</sup> Nearly half of the state’s Native peoples live in 200 Native villages in rural Alaska. [Alaska Native villages](#) often have complex governance structures where several distinct governing bodies perform overlapping governance tasks. Villages may include a city government and a federally recognized tribal government, which may be under the jurisdiction of a borough government. Most Alaska Native villages also have a village corporation formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq.). There are twelve [Alaska Native Regional Corporations](#). It is not unusual for a tribal council member to also serve on city or borough governments and on the village corporation.

NOAA recognizes that more work needs to be done to successfully consult with tribal governments and engage with Alaska Native villages and communities. Tribes are included in this plan because they would benefit from NOAA’s EEJ activities since they are impacted by federal fisheries, research and monitoring, and other actions.

Alaska faces new challenges—large-scale ecosystem changes due to changing ocean temperatures and rapid loss of sea ice with the continued influence of climate change—that greatly impact our work. Since 2020, Chinook and chum salmon runs in the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers have reached historic lows, threatening rural and Indigenous communities’ economic, social, and cultural ways. Two major Alaska fisheries—Pacific cod in the Gulf of Alaska and snow crab in the Bering Sea—were closed for the first time in response to dramatic resource declines related to two unprecedented marine heatwaves. These fishery closures affected not only fishing communities but also coastal and rural communities across Alaska that process these resources. These closures also have national and global impacts. Shifting commercial fish stocks in the Bering Sea are affecting all those dependent on the marine ecosystem. During these marine heatwaves in both the Gulf of Alaska (2014-2016 and 2019) and the Bering Sea (2014-2019), there were record levels of marine mammal strandings (e.g., ice-associated seals and gray whales) and seabird die-offs—some of which are important subsistence resources. In recent years, new threats are emerging from harmful algal blooms.

These changes have a disproportionate effect on underserved communities that lack resources to fully engage in federal fisheries management. This heightens the importance of equitable data collection and decision-making about marine resources. It is also creating new resource management challenges and raising access rights issues as subsistence, recreational, and commercial species shift distribution. Concerns over equity issues related to some current management measures (e.g., individual fishing quotas (IFQs)) were also shared during NOAA Fisheries–led listening sessions.

In these uncertain times, it is increasingly important to consider competing uses of marine resources and different social, cultural, and economic goals for sustainable resource management, including protection of the long-term health of the ecosystem and continued optimization of fisheries yield.

There was an opportunity offered for public input/comment on this regional EEJ implementation plan. Alaska Native Tribes and communities experience barriers to fair treatment and meaningful involvement in NOAA Fisheries’ work, some of which stem from our own policies and practices. The following concerns were identified by communities during listening sessions and the initial development phase of this draft EEJ implementation plan:

- The need for equitable representation at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
- Antiquated communication technology and the high cost of travel within the state due to limited road systems that make engagement and participation in regulatory processes challenging
- Regulatory hurdles that restrict fishermen’s ability to diversify to take advantage of new fishing opportunities

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<sup>4</sup> This is based on the 2024 list of federally recognized tribes identified by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and is subject to change. More information is available on the [BIA webpage](#).

## NOAA Fisheries | Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan

- National Standards that are not reflective of the needs of Alaska Native communities, small boat fisheries, as well as coastal and rural Alaska communities
- The need for more effective use of rulemaking and more responsive management to respond to environmental challenges.
- More timely response to disasters.
- Limited opportunities to establish new co-management agreements to fill voids left by organizations that are no longer operational.
- The need for more direct government-to-government engagement (e.g., state/federal and federal/tribal government)
- Limited awareness of all NOAA Fisheries regional office and science center programs and projects
- Focused effort to provide opportunities for young fishermen to get into the industry (graying of the fleet)
- Support for place-based research
- More support for social science studies and scientists
- Need for more consistent surveys in the Gulf of Alaska and more tagging studies and genetic samples to study wild vs. hatchery salmon stocks
- Tariffs in the markets and other market conditions driving price of fish down
- Acknowledgement that Equity and Environmental Justice ensures everyone has a seat at the table

These needs are captured in the following joint AKRO and AFSC Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan.

This plan is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees or agents, or any other person.

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# List of Acronyms

- ABL:** Auke Bay Laboratories (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)
- AFSC:** Alaska Fisheries Science Center
- DIR:** Directorate Office, Alaska Fisheries Science Center
- AKRO:** Alaska Regional Office
- BOD:** Board of Directors (Alaska Fisheries Science Center)
- BSAI:** Bering Sea Aleutian Islands
- CDQs:** Community Development Program Quotas
- COMMS:** Communications
- DOC:** Department of Commerce
- EEJ:** Equity and Environmental Justice
- EEJ WG:** A Joint Alaska Fisheries Science Center and Alaska Regional Office working group
- FMA:** Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)
- HCD:** Habitat Conservation Division (Alaska Regional Office)
- IDEA:** Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Team (Alaska Regional Office)
- IARPC:** Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee
- IKTK:** Indigenous Knowledge/Traditional Knowledge
- LKTK:** Local Knowledge/Traditional Knowledge
- MML:** Marine Mammal Laboratory (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)
- MREP:** Marine Resource Education Program
- NMFS:** National Marine Fisheries Service
- NOAA:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- NOAA Fisheries:** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service
- OMD:** Operations and Management Division (Alaska Regional Office)
- OMI:** Operations, Management and Information (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)
- PRD:** Protected Resources Division (Alaska Regional Office)
- RA:** Regional Administrator (Alaska Regional Office)
- RACE:** Resource Assessment and Conservation Engineering (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)

**REFM:** Resource Ecology and Fisheries Management (Alaska Fisheries Science Center Division)

**SFD:** Sustainable Fisheries Division (Alaska Regional Office)

**SLT:** Senior Leadership Team

**TIDE:** Team for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (Alaska Fisheries Science Center)

**WCT:** Workforce Collaboration Team (Alaska Fisheries Science Center)

# Introduction

## NOAA Fisheries in Alaska

The Alaska Regional Office (AKRO) works with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to manage Alaska’s sustainable fisheries under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). AKRO works to implement regulations under the MSA, implement Council recommendations if consistent with the MSA and other applicable law, and develop and implement policy to maximize fishing opportunities while ensuring the sustainability of fisheries and fishing communities in Alaska. The waters off Alaska support some of the most productive and valuable commercial fisheries in the world, and are also home to the largest populations of marine mammals in the nation.

We also work to recover and conserve protected species—like whales, sea lions, and seals—while supporting responsible fishing and resource development. We provide management and oversight for the conservation and recovery of marine mammal species in Alaska under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, Whaling Convention Act, and Fur Seal Act. We provide guidance on the mitigation of fishery–marine mammal interactions and adaptive management measures to reduce impacts from disturbance, harassment, and takes. We also implement agreements with Alaska Native groups to co-manage the subsistence use of marine mammal species under Section 119 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

We are working to protect, restore, and promote stewardship of marine, estuarine, and riverine habitat to support our nation’s fisheries for future generations. We consult and coordinate with Alaska Native Tribes, industries, stakeholder groups, federal government agencies, and private citizens to avoid, minimize, or offset the adverse effects of human activities on Essential Fish Habitat and living marine resources in Alaska. This work includes conducting and/or reviewing environmental analyses for a large variety of activities ranging from commercial fishing to coastal development to large transportation and energy projects. We identify technically and economically feasible alternatives and offer realistic recommendations for the conservation of valuable living marine resources. We focus on activities in habitats used by federally managed fish species located offshore, nearshore, in estuaries, and in freshwater areas important to anadromous salmon.

The Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) provides the science to support sustainable management and conservation efforts for fish, crabs, and marine mammals in Alaska. We monitor Alaska marine ecosystems through research surveys on vessels, planes, and uncrewed systems and by placing fisheries observers and electronic monitoring systems on commercial fishing vessels. We assess abundance and trends of whether populations are increasing or decreasing. We also conduct a variety of other important studies in laboratories and in the field to understand species’ diet, growth, reproduction, and overall health and how climate change is affecting Alaska marine habitats and ecosystems.



# About the Alaska EEJ Implementation Plan

The Alaska Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Implementation Plan represents the efforts by NOAA Fisheries to improve the ways in which we equitably serve our Alaska communities. The AKRO and AFSC recognize the importance of integrating EEJ into our work to create greater inclusivity and accessibility to our federal government processes and services. The success of this plan is contingent on leadership support, staff commitment to EEJ, and resource availability. We know that it will take time to achieve this implementation plan and are committed to making progress toward our goals informed by our legislative mandates, our constituents, and the communities we serve.

This plan is a **living document** that will be reviewed annually and updated as needed to ensure it contains recent feedback and addresses evolving Alaska community needs. We welcome Alaska community feedback and suggestions on this plan at any time.

This plan must be implemented consistent with applicable laws and subject to the availability of appropriations.

## NOAA Fisheries National EEJ Strategy

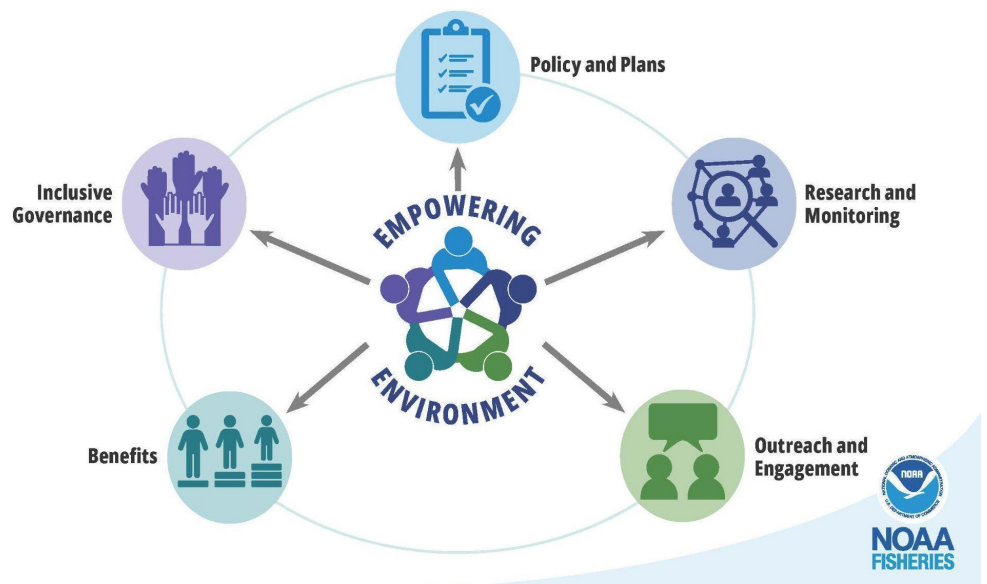
In May 2023, NOAA Fisheries released the [National Equity and Environmental Justice \(EEJ\) Strategy](#) intended to guide the agency to equitably serve all communities in our stewardship of the nation’s ocean resources and their habitat. Regions, science centers, and program offices were directed to develop implementation plans outlining the actions each office would take, specific and responsive to the needs of underserved communities in their region, to advance EEJ.

The National EEJ Strategy identified three overarching goals for the agency:

1. Prioritize identification, equitable treatment, and meaningful involvement of underserved communities
2. Provide equitable delivery of services
3. Prioritize EEJ in our mission work with demonstrable progress

To reach these goals, NOAA Fisheries also identified six core areas to improve (see Figure 1). The Alaska EEJ Implementation Plan identifies region-specific priorities and actions around each core area.

Figure 1. The six core EEJ areas identified in the national strategy



## Reporting and Accountability

AKRO and AFSC will jointly provide to the public annual progress reports towards implementation of this Plan, recognizing that many actions have long timeframes and may be constrained by available resources. We will continue

engaging with communities throughout Alaska on our efforts and will share with our partners progress made to this plan and updates on future iterations.

## Alignment with Other Strategic Plans

This plan aligns with ongoing strategic planning efforts focused on improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in the NOAA Fisheries workforce, on creating pathways for communities in fisheries work, and on our organization-wide initiatives to advance science and management through an ecosystem-based fisheries management and climate lens, to meet ecosystem objectives in a changing environment. Relevant planning documents include:

- NOAA Fisheries Alaska Geographic Strategic Plan for 2024-2027
- [Alaska Region 2022-2027 Strategic Plan](#)
- [Alaska Fisheries Science Center Strategic Science Plan for 2023-2027](#)
- [Arctic, Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska Regional Action Plans](#) to Implement the NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy through 2024

## Initial Engagement Methods for Developing this Plan

In early 2023, AKRO and AFSC formed an EEJ working group (EEJ WG). The group comprises a diverse set of disciplines, including: communications professionals, socio-anthropologists, a tribal research coordinator, a tribal relations coordinator, and leadership team members. The team finalized an Alaska Engagement Plan that incorporates an initial list of underserved communities in Alaska, which it is continuing to develop with broader input from Alaska stakeholders. Outreach to Alaska Native Tribes was prioritized, as Tribes have voiced previous concerns regarding EEJ and will benefit from NOAA's EEJ activities. We are also working internally to engage our own workforce through Town Hall and Tribal Forum presentations, developing a joint consultation protocol with Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations, developing cultural awareness training, implementing a research engagement protocol, and establishing internal working groups to promote greater equity and inclusion in our workforce.

The EEJ WG focused on remote, rural villages and small commercial and recreational fishing communities throughout Alaska. These communities are culturally and demographically diverse. Many are mixed-economies, dependent on both commercial and subsistence fishing opportunities. Rural Alaska Native communities engage in complex mixed economies, wherein community members participate in a combination of wild resource subsistence harvest and commercial-wage employment. Mixed economies are adaptive, allowing for adjustment to changing social and environmental conditions. While cash is used for common goods and services (e.g., fuel, heating oil, travel, and housing), it is also used to support active subsistence harvest by purchasing necessary tools such as gear, fishing permits, nets, or ammunition. Bartering systems based on subsistence resource exchange are also extremely important to these communities. A subsistence way of life continues to be vital for daily survival and cultural identity, and has sustained Indigenous peoples for millennia. Alaska Native communities constitute nearly a quarter of Alaska's population. Historically, these communities have been underrepresented in the fisheries management and regional council process even though they can be greatly impacted by fisheries management decisions.

NOAA Fisheries Alaska EEJ WG developed a two-phased external engagement strategy to be implemented in FY 2023 and 2024 for the development of this implementation plan. This work complements ongoing outreach and engagement and social science research already being undertaken by AFSC and AKRO staff. The goal is to improve our service delivery to underserved communities and Indigenous groups to address inequalities that exist and to promote a more culturally aware, socially responsive, and diverse workforce. We want to understand how we can most effectively inform and partner with underserved communities and Alaska Native Tribes and empower them in the fisheries management process and research in Alaska.

In the initial phase, which was conducted May 2023 to March 2024, the team sought broader input to both ensure that it had properly identified Alaska underserved communities and to hear directly from these communities on the best ways to engage and provide information on topics of interest.

We presented information to and hosted conversations among tribal forums and fisheries groups throughout FY 2023. In addition, we hosted nine Town Hall teleconferences with tribal governments and organizations, charter boat operators, and other Alaska constituents. These events were advertised via postings on both NOAA Fisheries and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council websites, and related announcements via our respective listservs and constituent lists, promotion in the popular Alaska Fish notes, Alaska Native News and radio, and newspapers. We also solicited some general written input from the public through December 1, 2024. Finally, the Alaska EEJ WG compiled information on preferred communications methods, the best season or timing for reaching out to these underserved communities, and preferred locations to engage in order to begin planning for Phase 2 of the implementation plan.

During Phase 2, planned for April 2024 through September 2024, team members will conduct in-person regional hub meetings and virtual outreach meetings with interested Indigenous groups, including Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and underserved stakeholder groups to gather further feedback in order to compile and document community needs. The goals of these meetings are to ensure that communities have a voice in the development of this plan and that our efforts are tailored to meet their needs. Feedback from Phase 2 will be incorporated into a future iteration of the implementation plan.

## EEJ Objectives Implementation

The Alaska Regional Office and Alaska Fisheries Science Center identified priority actions using the objectives framework of the NOAA Fisheries' national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#). Assessing performance metrics and determining the resources required to implement EEJ activities will be accomplished through community engagement and included in Phase 2. The [DOC EJ Scorecard metrics](#) will be used in this evaluation.

### EEJ Regional and Science Center Actions

AKRO and AFSC incorporated community input to identify actions regarding how success will be measured and the resources needed to advance our work around the six core areas identified in the national EEJ Strategy. These core areas include an empowering environment, policy and plans, research and monitoring, outreach and engagement, equitable distribution of benefits, and inclusive governance.

## Empowering Environment

1. An empowering environment provides the institutional support, including training and resources, needed to implement multiple EEJ approaches at NOAA Fisheries. Internal leadership and management have identified EEJ as a top priority and encourage staff to consider EEJ in every aspect of their work. Action areas include:
  - 1A. Leadership champions in EEJ
  - 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions
  - 1C. Build a workforce by securing more staff and expertise for EEJ implementation
  - 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities

AKRO and AFSC have identified a leadership champion to facilitate the integration of EEJ activities into everyday work, in addition to hiring a regional office tribal liaison and a tribal research coordinator, building internal working groups focused on serving our communities better (i.e., Alaska EEJ WG, Regional Tribal Engagement Team, Fisheries Tribal Engagement Team), and improving internal and external coordination to reduce the burden on communities.

To promote an empowering environment for EEJ, AKRO and AFSC used community feedback to link directly to NOAA's actions under each core action provided in Table 1. Examples of current and future actions related to the six core areas are captured in Table 1, with specific details provided in Appendix A. Because this is a living document, these actions can and will evolve over time.

## Policy and Planning

2. Policy and planning efforts are designed to ensure our policies promote equal opportunities for all and do not create unintended inequities or unequal burdens for underserved communities.
  - 2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities to better incorporate EEJ principles in policy and planning efforts
  - 2B. Advance EEJ through our participation in the North Pacific Council process

AKRO and AFSC will explore legal mandates and regulations to identify potential opportunities for increased equity to advance EEJ through our participation in the North Pacific Council process.

To further incorporate EEJ into our policies and plans, AKRO and AFSC used the community input and information provided through community feedback to link directly to NOAA's actions provided in Table 1. Linking community feedback to EEJ actions. Examples for current and future actions related to policy and planning are captured in Table 1, with further details provided in Appendix A.

## Research and Monitoring

3. Research and monitoring includes identifying underserved communities and their needs, conducting collaborative research, and assessing impacts of management decisions. Action areas include:
  - 3A. Establish and build relationships to improve incorporation of EEJ in research and monitoring
  - 3B. Identify and apply best practices to co-develop, co-create, and share research that is meaningful to communities
  - 3C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change
  - 3D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products

AKRO and AFSC have incorporated EEJ into our research and monitoring by establishing and building relationships to improve EEJ in research and monitoring, using social science to better define fisheries benefits to communities and gain a better understanding of climate change impacts, and exploring ways to improve our research through the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge.

To embed EEJ into our research and monitoring, the AKRO and AFSC used the community input and information provided through community feedback to link directly to NOAA's actions provided in Table 1. Examples for current and future actions related to research and monitoring are captured in Table 1, with further details provided in Appendix A.

## Outreach and Engagement

4. Outreach and engagement includes building relationships with underserved communities to better understand their engagement preferences, and improve information sharing with all communities. Action areas include:
  - 4A. Refine and expand best practices to all underserved communities
  - 4B. Continue to apply best practices for communication and engagement by meeting with communities where they are, providing early and consistent engagement as well as improve timely response and follow up by NOAA staff
  - 4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices
  - 4D. Continue to develop and support internship programs for underserved communities

AKRO and AFSC have incorporated EEJ into our outreach and engagement work by using the AFSC Communications/Engagement Protocol for Working with Indigenous Communities for research communications and engagement; developing a joint Tribal Consultation Protocol with Alaska Native Tribes and Alaska Native Corporations; revamping our Fisheries Tribal Newsletter based on tribal feedback; improving access to NOAA education programs, technical training events, and job opportunities advertised through our quarterly Tribal newsletter; and continuing to support and host summer internship programs through partnership with Sealaska Heritage Institute, Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, North Pacific Research Board, and Alaska Sea Grant. These examples of EEJ help us to ensure more equitable access to NOAA Fisheries products and services and provide opportunities to gather input from Indigenous communities on our research and management efforts.

To embed EEJ into our outreach and engagement, AKRO and AFSC used the community input and information provided through community feedback to link directly to NOAA's actions provided in Table 1. Examples of current and future actions related to outreach and engagement are captured in Table 1, with further details and examples provided in Appendix A.

## Equitably Distribute Benefits

5. Equitably distributing benefits includes distributing benefits equitably among communities by increasing the access to opportunities for underserved communities through this action item:
  - 5A. Improve access and remove barriers to federal government resources

AKRO and AFSC have incorporated EEJ into their benefits distribution practices by hosting grant meetings with Alaska Native Tribes to explain the application process and answer questions and by attending tribal forums to present information on the Community Development Quota (CDQ) Program and answer questions on federal permitting processes. The CDQ program is focused on the broader western Alaska villages and seeks to alleviate poverty, provide economic and social benefits to residents, and achieve sustainable local economies.

To embed EEJ into how we distribute benefits, AKRO and AFSC used the community input and information provided through community feedback to link directly to NOAA’s actions provided in Table 1. Examples for current and future actions related to equitably distributing benefits are captured in Table 1, with further details and examples provided in Appendix A.

## Inclusive Governance

6. Inclusive governance includes enabling the meaningful involvement of underserved communities in decision-making processes. Action areas include:
  - 6A. Establish and build relationships to improve inclusive decision-making
  - 6B. Improve opportunities for inclusive governance in public processes

AKRO and AFSC have incorporated EEJ into our governance process by establishing and building relationships through regularly scheduled engagement meetings to improve inclusive decision-making; providing invitations for early and frequent engagement with Alaska Native Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and tribal organizations; and exploring additional opportunities for tribal and federal conversations to improve inclusive governance.

To embed EEJ into our governance process, AKRO and AFSC used the community input and information provided through community feedback to link directly to NOAA’s actions provided in Table 1. Examples for current and future actions related to research and monitoring are captured in Table 1, with further details and examples provided in Appendix A.

## Alignment of EEJ Actions with Community Feedback

In this section we summarize some of the major themes from meetings with stakeholders and partners in 2023 and 2024. This is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all community interests; rather it is a high-level summary of the discussions and input we have received so far. In Table 1, we list the EEJ actions identified from the feedback meetings and link them to the six Alaska EEJ Action Areas identified above. While much of the community feedback was used to shape this implementation plan, some requests and/or feedback could not be addressed in this plan.

While each of the communities has unique needs, there were some common themes from across Alaska.

Table 1. Linking Community Feedback to EEJ Actions

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
<b>Empowering Environment</b>	Improve cultural knowledge of NOAA Fisheries staff	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ
	Train NOAA Fisheries staff so they understand how to navigate cross-culturally and are able to more effectively interact	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities
	Improve internal federal coordination to avoid community burden through over-engagement	1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities
	Improve communication, engagement, consultation, and follow-through by agency staff	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities
	Respect Indigenous Knowledge as a form of best available science, such as Alaska Native Traditional Knowledge and Local Knowledge and expertise, and learn best ways for incorporation	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation
	Provide leadership and guidance to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to ensure historically underserved and affected communities can meaningfully engage in the process and influence management outcomes	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities 2B. Advance EEJ through our participation in the council process
	Urgent need to increase capacity at NOAA Fisheries in Alaska Region by hiring more tribal liaisons, social scientists, and experts in Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge and co-production of that knowledge	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
<b>Policy and Plans</b>	Address distrust in federal regulations due to cumulative burdens (e.g., restrictions on fishing access from multiple federal agencies, burden of the permit process, and the impacts to species availability and resource access)	2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities
	Support Alaska Native representation on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (not just Advisory Panel)  Prioritize the inclusion of Alaska Native representatives in the Council and NOAA Fisheries' decision-making processes  Give tribal communities a voice and seats at the table to discuss subsistence fisheries and other issues  Return to the priority of subsistence fisheries before commercial and sport fishery gains  Prioritize EEJ in fisheries actions and take adequate action	2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation
	Further refine NOAA's definition of equity that is more tailored and refined based on the experiences of those who have faced inequality	2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation
	Negotiate new co-management agreements for marine mammals	2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities
	Engage with and support NOAA headquarters in updating the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, National Standards 4, 8, and 9	2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation



EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
	Learn how best to integrate Indigenous Knowledge such as Alaska Native Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Local Knowledge in federal decision-making	2A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation 2B. Advance EEJ through our participation in the council process
<b>Research and Monitoring</b>	Include local communities in research projects and management decisions, including locally relevant reciprocity protocols, identify projects of local concern/interest and needs  Invest in tribally led research  Co-create opportunities for research	3A. Establish and build relationships to improve incorporation of EEJ in research and monitoring 3B. Identify and apply best practices to co-develop, co-create, and share research that is meaningful to communities
	Increase NOAA’s capacity for social scientists and tribal liaisons and traditional and local knowledge to support human dimensions research, and particularly the impact of fisheries management and federal entities on fishing and Indigenous communities	3C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to the human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change
	Bring Indigenous and Local Knowledge into research; reflect community perspectives	3D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products
	Support capacity building and opportunities for local place-based work and tribally led research	3D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products
	Stronger sociological research assessing impacts of fisheries management programs on Native communities and incorporate this into decision making  Elevation of social science to parallel biological sciences in decision making	1A. Leadership champions EEJ 1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions 1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities  3C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to the human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
	<p>NOAA development expertise to really “know” each fishery-dependent community and how their decisions affect them</p> <p>Discuss opportunities for applied Indigenous and Local Knowledge/scientific research</p> <p>Consult Alaska Native communities about research</p> <p>Better data support for community-led initiatives from NOAA scientists</p> <p>Incorporate principles of co-production in design and implementation of research objectives</p>	<p>1A. Leadership champions EEJ</p> <p>1B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions</p> <p>1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation</p> <p>1D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities</p> <p>3A. Establish and build relationships to improve incorporation of EEJ in research and monitoring</p> <p>3B. Identify and apply best practices to co-develop, co-create, and share research that is meaningful to communities</p> <p>3C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to the human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change</p> <p>3D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products</p>
<p><b>Outreach and Engagement</b></p>	<p>Lack of NOAA staff presence in communities</p> <p>Identify pathways of engagement with Indigenous and coastal communities</p>	<p>4A. Refine and expand best practices for communication and engagement</p> <p>4B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are)</p>
	<p>Improve communication, knowledge sharing, and engagement with communities and partners, and consider what the benefits of engagement are to the target communities, and don’t assume you know what communities want, ask them</p>	<p>4A. Refine and expand best practices for communication and engagement</p> <p>4B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are, early and consistent engagement and improve timely response and follow-up by NOAA staff)</p> <p>4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices</p>

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
	Host in-person culturally appropriate meetings to have inclusive conversations with Alaska communities	4A. Refine and expand best practices for communication and engagement 4B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are, early and consistent engagement and improve timely response and follow-up by NOAA staff)
	Provide sufficient, timely, and accessible information in plain language	4A. Refine and expand best practices for communication and engagement 4B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are, early and consistent engagement and improve timely response and follow-up by NOAA staff)
	Better utilize easily accessible sources of information and multi-modes to solicit and gather feedback (e.g., regional contacts, telephone calls, websites, radio stations, local newspapers, social media)	4B. Continue to apply best practices for communication and engagement by meeting with communities where they are, providing early and consistent engagement as well as improve timely response and follow-up by NOAA staff
	Provide education and internship opportunities for students from underserved communities	4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices
	Provide training on navigating the federal application processes	4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices
	Hire youth interns/cultural rangers to build Traditional and local Knowledge databases within rural communities (pair with The Nature Conservancy EVOS program)	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 4D. Continue to develop and support internship programs for underserved communities
	Provide how-to training and application assistance for tribal communities, small-boat fishermen on navigating the fish permitting system (i.e, halibut and sablefish) and other programs	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices

EEJ Core Area	Community Feedback	Alaska EEJ Actions that Address this Feedback
	Provide grant application assistance and training for tribal and small-boat communities	1C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation 4C. Improve access to NOAA education programs, technical training, and job opportunities within the regional and science center offices
<b>Benefits</b>	Equitably distribute benefits by taking into account the barriers faced by Alaska underserved communities and remove them	5A. Improve access and remove barriers to federal government resources
	Remove direct competition in grant processes so tribes do not have to compete with one another, other federal entities, or the public for grant resources	5A. Improve access and remove barriers to federal government resources
	Allocate more grants (S/K grants and coastal funding) for new projects and co-management funding for existing programs	5A. Improve access and remove barriers to federal government resources
	Share more information on availability of NOAA Fisheries services and benefits to Native and Alaska communities (e.g., small-boat, local trawl fleet, recreational fishermen and seafood processing sector)	5A. Improve access and remove barriers to federal government resources
<b>Inclusive Governance</b>	Improve management through relationship building	6A. Establish and build relationships to improve inclusive decision-making
	Support the autonomy of local resource agencies	6B. Improve opportunities for inclusive governance in public process
	Create opportunities for more meaningful engagement in management and decision-making	6A. Establish and build relationships to improve inclusive decision-making 6B. Improve opportunities for inclusive governance in public process

# EEJ Short and Long-Term Review Processes

## 1. Short-Term Review Process

Upon completion of Phase 2 of the external engagement strategy, including community hub meetings in various locations across Alaska, the EEJ Working Group will collate the information and feedback received and determine the appropriate way to incorporate this new information into the implementation plan in winter 2024.

## 2. Long-Term Review Process

In Spring 2025, within 1 year of completion of this implementation plan, the Alaska EEJ Working Group will revisit the plan to evaluate whether there is a need to update it to incorporate additional feedback.

Future implementation plan review and updates will continue to occur in yearly intervals.

# Appendix A. Discrete EEJ Actions

## 1. Empowering Environment

### A. Leadership champions EEJ

National EEJ Empowering Environment Actions: 2, 6, 8

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AKRO RA/ AFSC BOD/NMFS HQ	1. Prioritize EEJ activities in planning and budgeting processes	Resources available to support activities	Number of actions implemented from the Implementation Plan	Annually
AKRO RA/ AFSC BOD	2. Leadership supports AKRO and AFSC representation on the national EEJ WG	Link regional and national EEJ efforts	Identify leads and consistent representation/participation of AFSC and AKRO on national EEJ WG	Ongoing
AKRO RA/ AFSC BOD	3. Leadership supports an on-going Alaska Region EEJ Implementation Team with representatives from AFSC and AKRO that are empowered to serve as a resource for completion of the implementation plan and implementing actions identified	Supports cross office coordination for EEJ implementation and accountability	Alaska EEJ WG has equitable representation across divisions and geographies, as practicable, within NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region	Ongoing
AKRO RA/ AFSC BOD	4. Create two full-time positions focused on Indigenous engagement Hire a part-time position to support EEJ coordination	Increases staff capacity for EEJ and supports relationship building and effective and inclusive research, outreach, and governance	Hired AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator; AKRO Tribal Engagement Coordinator	Completed Fall/Winter 2024
AKRO RA/ AFSC BOD/EEJ WG	5. Leadership supports development of first federal and tribal government/organization consultation protocol	Supports relationship building and effective and inclusive research, outreach, and governance	Number of meetings held to solicit input from tribal governments/organizations; number of tribal governments/organizations involved Completion of protocol	Spring-Summer 2024 meetings By December 2024
AKRO RA/ AFSC BOD	Create full-time position focused on EEJ staff coordination/training and support implementation of EEJ plan and reporting	Increases staff capacity for EEJ and supports relationship building and effective and inclusive research, outreach, and governance	Alaska EEJ WG has equitable representation across divisions and geographies, as practicable, within NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region	Requires future funding

## B. Integrate EEJ into everyday work through internal capacity building and implementation of actions

National EEJ Empowering Environment Actions: 2, 3, 8, 10, 11

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AFSC BOD/AFSC Supervisors/EEJ WG/AKRO RA	1. Make EEJ a priority to discuss during AFSC Leadership/Supervisor and AKRO SLT retreats, meetings, and/or workshops	Ensures that steps are being taken to address EEJ actions	% of tri-annual AFSC BOD retreat with EEJ on agenda; % of annual AFSC Supervisor meeting with EEJ on agenda; % of AKRO SLT meetings with EEJ on agenda	AFSC Ongoing/AKRO 2024
EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator	3. Develop resources to support community engagement activities including guides for staff visiting rural communities, cultural competency training, etc.	Supports relationship building and effective and inclusive research, outreach, and governance	Number of resources created; number of staff that consult and/or have found each resource useful  Design and maintain intranet pages with resources for internal staff working with tribes and underserved communities	1-3 years  Ongoing
EEJ WGA/AFSC EEJ Coordinator	4. Coordinate and maintain annual report on EEJ implementation plan progress on metrics and revise plan as needed	Supports accountability and linking regional and national EEJ efforts	Number of completed progress reports	Annually
EEJ WG/Invited Speakers/AFSC EEJ Coordinator	5. Host EEJ training opportunities for all staff such as AFSC FAQ and AFSC Tide Pool webinars as well as AKRO Take 20 and IDEA webinars	Increases staff capacity for EEJ and supports relationship building and effective and inclusive research, outreach, and governance	Number of EEJ training opportunities provided; % of staff trained in skills supportive of EEJ; measurable increase in understanding through before-and-after training surveys from staff	Every 1-3 years

## C. Build a workforce with higher capacity and expertise for EEJ implementation

National EEJ Empowering Environment Actions: 1, 2, 8, 11

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AFSC TIDE/WCT AKRO Take 20/IDEA	1. Develop a plan to increase staff capacity for EEJ through hiring and training	Supports intern and job opportunities for underserved communities Supports human capital for long-term relationship building Supports cross office coordination for EEJ implementation and accountability Provides cultural and language expertise needed to support effective and place-based research, outreach, and inclusive governance	Increase in % staff with positions and skills that support EEJ implementation such as social science and place-based cultural knowledge	1-7 years
OMI/OMD Hiring Managers	2. Increase access to positions to underserved communities. Revisit position descriptions, minimum qualifications, and bands/ladders to target individuals with expertise identified for EEJ implementation (e.g., Indigenous Knowledge and cultural awareness)	Supports job opportunities for underserved communities, and for areas of expertise to support EEJ implementation inclusive of research, outreach, and governance	Increase in percentage of staff with positions and skills that support EEJ implementation	Ongoing
SFD/FMA	2a. Increase access to marine fisheries observer jobs for underserved communities by advertising jobs in more accessible ways, reinstating the Alaska Native Fishery Observer Program, and identifying opportunities to recognize required skills to be eligible for observer training through a Fisheries-authorized alternative training program	Supports job opportunities for underserved communities	# of job vacancy announcements highlighted in Tribal newsletter; increase in percentage of fisheries observers from underserved communities working in the observer program; FMA Alaska Native Fishery Observer Program reinstated	1-5 years
AFSC OMI/Division Directors/Su pervisors	Develop a performance element for AFSC supervisors and staff performance plans re: supporting EEJ and implementation of the AFSC Communications Protocol into the research planning process.	Builds capacity for EEJ and responsibility to Alaska Native communities to engage more consistently	# of performance plans that integrate performance elements reflecting EEJ and implementing AFSC Communications Protocol	3 years



## D. Improve coordination to reduce burden on communities

National EEJ Empowering Environment Actions: 7, 12

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator/BOD/RA	1. Coordinate NOAA line office activities with communities and other federal agencies	NOAA line office EEJ efforts linked to IARPC, Alaska Regional Collaboration Team, Alaska Marine Mammal Co-Management, and others	Number of briefings or engagements with leadership focused on federal activity coordination	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-5 years
AFSC BOD/AKRO RA/EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator & AKRO Comms Coordinator	2. Annual virtual strategic Communication meetings (3)	Supports updating of best practices for outreach efforts and accountability for our EEJ efforts	Number of meetings to assess how NOAA Fisheries is doing with implementation of its Alaska EEJ Implementation	Annually
ALL	3. Improve coordination with nationally based federal agency partners to increase awareness of AFSC and AKRO community concerns and prioritize locally based relationships	Alaska underserved communities are considered in national discussions and decision-making	Broader recognition of Alaska community priorities at the national level	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-5 years
ALL	4. Improve federal EEJ coordination between AKRO/AFSC, across NOAA Fisheries and NOAA, NPFMC, and other federal agencies as well as the Alaska Department of Fish and Game	Increases internal coordination and capacity so as to reduce community burden and confusion of projects working in silos or at cross purposes	Number of intra- and inter-agency EEJ coordination meetings	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-7 years
ALL/EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator & AKRO Communications Coordinator	5. Increase collaboration and communication across staff members to achieve EEJ and project goals. Share best practices for effective communication, understanding of local priorities and needs, and leveraging existing relationships with local constituents	Increases internal coordination so as to reduce community burden and confusion of projects working in silos or at cross purposes, and increases communication regarding EEJ issues	Increase in the % of projects that include internal debrief in the project cycle; number of place-based projects that involve or make local staff aware of project coordination Annual meeting to share successes and failures in implementing EEJ	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-5 years

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Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator	6. Create a system to track and coordinate travel activities. Host internal meetings for program sharing regarding EEJ information	Increases internal coordination so as to reduce community burden and confusion of projects working in silos or at cross purposes	Number of internal program coordination meetings held; % of travel-related projects and/or divisions represented at coordination meetings; number of tools created; activities monitored and updated	1 year and ongoing

## 2. Policy and Plans

### A. Re-evaluate interpretation of internal and external policies, legal mandates, and regulations and innovate within legal boundaries to identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation

National EEJ Policy and Plans Actions: 1, 2, 3, 4

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	1. Identify synergies and engage with Alaska Regional Action Plan (ARAP) for Climate Science project lead to facilitate the incorporation of EEJ into existing ARAP projects	Links EEJ with climate change and provide assistance to address community resource access issues associated with climate change	# of ARAP projects that include EEJ considerations	1 year and ongoing
ALL	2. Identify Fisheries policies and plans for opportunities to integrate EEJ	EEJ integrated in policy and plans	Number of policies and plans updated	1 year and ongoing
AFSC	2b. Staff engage in NPFMC Bering Sea Fishery Ecosystem Plan Team and related task forces and Social Science Plan Team and working to better include Indigenous Knowledge and Local Knowledge in policy and management decisions	Advances EEJ through our participation and incorporation of EEJ in science and management through the Council Process	Number of products and policy and management actions that reflect more inclusive knowledge systems	Ongoing
REFM/SFD	2c. Codify EEJ activity into internal administrative and programmatic policies and procedures such as Stock BSIA processes and through development of more inclusive Ecosystem Status Reports (ESRs) and Ecosystem and Socioeconomic Profiles (ESPs)	Embeds EEJ into internal policy	Number of policies and procedures updated	Ongoing
AKRO	2d. Incorporate EEJ analyses into impact assessments such as NEPA cumulative impact assessments and other management products	Impact of management on underserved communities is better included in management decisions	Number of NEPA analyses that include EEJ considerations; number of tribal cooperating agencies involved in completed NEPA projects	Ongoing and expand efforts 1-3 years

## B. Advance EEJ through our participation in the Council process

National EEJ Policy and Plans Actions: 2, 4

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AFSC/AKRO staff	Engage more diverse voices in Council committees plan teams and advisory bodies (e.g., LKTKS Taskforce and Climate Change Taskforce) to advance EEJ and implementation of Indigenous Knowledge	More diverse council representation, integration of IKLK	Number of hours served on committees and advisory bodies; number of products produced through these efforts that incorporate EEJ and Indigenous/Local Knowledge to inform fisheries management	Ongoing

## 3. Research and Monitoring

### A. Establish and build relationships to improve incorporation of EEJ in research and monitoring

National EEJ Research and Monitoring Actions: 1, 9

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AFSC BOD/AFSC Supervisors/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator	1. Refine opportunities and protocols for meaningful and well-conceived opportunities for underserved community members to participate in NOAA research surveys and other research activities	Relationship and capacity building for jurisdictional agencies Supports job and training opportunities for underserved communities	Number of community participants on research cruises and other research activities	Annually
AFSC Research Supervisors/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator	2. Engage with Alaska communities to collaborate on and co-produce research	Relationship building and incorporation of local and Traditional Knowledge into research	Number of collaborative and co-produced research projects	Annually
FMA	3. Explore ways to engage underserved communities in observer program	Relationship building and incorporation of local knowledge into research and provide opportunities for underserved communities to join the federal workforce Build a future workforce that is more reflective of Alaska communities we serve	Develop an entry level observer program Number of new positions added	3-5 years
AFSC BOD	4. Support community-led and local place-based research and opportunities for Indigenous and underserved community members to engage in AFSC and other research	Relationship building and incorporation of local and Indigenous Knowledge into research.	Implement annual grant opportunity through AFSC FY24-26	3 years

## B. Identify and apply best practices to co-develop, co-create, and share research that is meaningful to communities.

National EEJ Research and Monitoring Actions: 1, 4, 5, 8

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
PRD/HCD/Aquaculture Program/ RACE/MML/ABL/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator/REFM Social Scientists/AFSC EEJ Coordinator	1. Identify opportunities to collaborate on and co-design research. This includes seeking interested communities and incorporating their input at every stage of the research, developing, collection, analysis, interpretation, co-authoring, writing, and sharing results	Making research more responsive to community needs and relationship building. Research process reflects best practices for equity and inclusivity	Number of research projects that align community interests and NOAA Fisheries mission	Ongoing
PRD/HCD/Aquaculture Program/ RACE/ABL/MML/Tribal Research Coordinator/AFSC Communications Program staff/AKRO Tribal Engagement Coordinator	1a. Consult with community experts before starting new research projects to understand community perspectives, interests, and concerns and have discussions at key junctures during the projects, including planning and results-sharing phases	Making research and management more responsive to community needs and relationship building	Implementation of AFSC Communications Protocol (2018) and region wide  Proportion of projects adopting this approach. Number of community participants/organizations included in discussions/meetings. Number of community meetings held	Ongoing
EEJ WG/AFSC EEJ Coordinator	2. Establish and coordinate with PIFSC on a PRA-approved question bank for external partners to evaluate NOAA Fisheries' performance (e.g., at data workshops, public hearings, staff performance over a period of year(s), etc.) through external stakeholders	Provides EEJ output metric monitoring availability	Number of NOAA line offices and Fisheries divisions consulted in refinement of question bank  Status of PRA application	1-3 years
AFSC Communication Program/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator/EEJ Coordinator/ALL	3. Share scientific and resource information with communities and affected stakeholders, including from surveys and research projects in a format that is accessible and culturally appropriate	Underserved communities and affected stakeholders have better access to and awareness of how science and management affects them	Number of science products shared with community that reach target audience	Ongoing

## C. Use social science to diversify how we define stakeholders and Fisheries benefits to communities, and use it to improve integration into analyses relevant to human dimension, environmental justice, and climate change

National EEJ Research and Monitoring Actions: 2, 3, 6, 8

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	1. Develop and improve social science and EEJ section of impact assessments and other applied science products such as Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports, and Fishery Ecosystem Plans	Impact of management on underserved communities is better included in management decisions	Number of EEJ sections or embedded references to community impacts in science and management products  Number of management products that incorporate non-economic fisheries benefits research	1-3 years and ongoing
REFM/SFD	1a. Conduct research that allows for characterization and quantification of non-economic benefits of fisheries to the full diversity of fishing communities and people participating in federal fisheries (i.e., not just fishermen) to ensure that policies and regulations are applied equitably among all fishery participants	Integrates benefits of fishing to underserved communities, and a more complete understanding of stakeholders into management	Number of social science products on these topics	1-5 years and ongoing
REFM/SFD	1b. Develop criteria and method for defining and identifying underserved communities in Alaska	Supports all EEJ analysis	Report or manuscript published	1-2 year
REFM	2. Produce an annual report focusing on fishing communities dependent on or substantially engaged in the North Pacific groundfish and crab fisheries (Annual Community Engagement and Participation Overview (ACEPO)); and develop <u>place-based social and economic well-being indicators</u> for Gulf of Alaska fishing communities linked to local marine ecosystems	Improves management decisions and potential impacts on fishing community well-being, consistent with the MSA and NS8 for implementation of fisheries management actions	Annual report; produce a public friendly resource Link to <u>social indicator map</u>	Ongoing
REFM	3. Support for social science research to explore upward mobility and access in Alaska fisheries with an aging demographic	Improves communication needs and potential impacts of fishery management decisions on fishing community well-being and opportunities for young fishermen, consistent with the MSA and NS8 for implementation of fisheries management actions	Published paper	Completed

## D. Improve research by including Indigenous and local ecological and cultural knowledge into our science and science products

National EEJ Research and Monitoring Actions: 1, 2, 3, 4

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	<p>1a. Adapt <a href="#">NOAA guidance</a> on incorporating Indigenous Knowledge to be regionally specific for Alaska</p> <p>1b. Coordinate with NPFMC to incorporate LKTK onramps into NMFS and Council processes for policy and management planning</p> <p>1c. Include considerations of dominant approaches and how to bridge worldviews and improve dialogue</p>	<p>Identifies regionally specific LKTK and local knowledge approaches and determines a strategy for incorporating LKTK in NOAA Fisheries' decision-making documents</p> <p>Management process is more inclusive</p>	<p>Guidance tools adapted to Alaska and community needs with EEJ perspective</p> <p>Number of identified pathways to integrate LKTK into policy and management decisions</p>	1-3 years
ALL	<p>2. Integrate Indigenous and local knowledge into science products and management decisions and document analyses (e.g., NEPA, ESRs, ESPs) and discuss ways to get community input for management ideas and feedback</p>	<p>Brings LKTK into products and analyses</p> <p>Research and management process is more inclusive</p>	<p>Number of identified pathways to integrate LKTK into science that supports management decisions</p> <p>Number of scientific products that integrate LKTK</p>	1-3 years
REFM/SFD	<p>2a. Engage with the local fishing communities to better understand stock structure and reproductive ecology of managed species and impacts of climate change on these species and fishing communities</p>	<p>Brings LKTK and local ecological knowledge into products and analyses</p>	<p>Include section on LKTK in NEPA document</p>	Ongoing
PRD	<p>2b. Practice more inclusive use and incorporation of LKTK in NOAA Fisheries' supporting scientific and management documents (e.g., species status reviews, biological reports, 5-year reviews, recovery plans) related to protected species management work.</p>	<p>Brings LKTK into products and analyses</p>	<p>Number of supporting documents that include LKTK</p>	Ongoing
ALL/REFM	<p>3. Science and social science staff to participate and lead efforts through the NPFMC to integrate LKTK into management products</p>	<p>Brings LKTK into products and analyses</p>	<p>Number of task force meetings and products produced through these efforts</p>	Ongoing



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Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ABL/REFM	4. Develop new modeling tools to identify ways to synthesize community-level ecosystem and climate observations, rooted in multiple forms of knowledge, and develop the processes and best practices to scale climate adaptation decision support tools for Bering Sea fisheries	Relationship building and incorporation of LKTK into research	Number of new tools and products developed to inform management	Ongoing
ABL/REFM	5. Conduct Preview of Ecosystem and Economic Conditions (PEEC) virtual seminar and social science led (i.e., data workshops) to incorporate LKTK and inform the assessment process	Relationship building and incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge into research	Participant insights gained that impact stock assessment processes or refine other research priorities	3 years

## 4. Outreach and Engagement

### A. Broadly implement best practices for communication and engagement across region

National EEJ Outreach and Engagement Actions: 1, 3, 4

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	1. Uphold commitment to be responsive to correspondence and requests from the community	Improved federal follow-through with the community as requested	Reported increase of responsiveness by NOAA Fisheries from community	Ongoing and expand 1-3 years
EEJ WG/EEJ Coordinator	2. Create and maintain a central mailing list for Tribal governments and organization representatives and underserved community lists	Improved transparency and efficient sharing of information	Improved delivery of information to tribes and underserved communities and improved response time from communities	Ongoing and expand 1-3 years
EEJ WG/EEJ Coordinator/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator/AKRO Tribal Engagement Coordinator/AFSC Communications	3. Identify culturally appropriate language access needs of Alaska communities, recognizing that there are many languages and dialects and communities are diverse	Best practice resources developed to enhance EEJ implementation	Best practices created for language access; number of outreach resources developed through current agency translation service contracts	1-2 years/need future funding

## B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement (meet communities where they are)

National EEJ Outreach and Engagement Actions: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AFSC RACE/MML /ABL/AFSC Communications	1. Increase in-person engagements with all NOAA Fisheries stakeholders in communities where our surveys deploy and return, when possible	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them	Number of in-person engagement with NOAA Fisheries stakeholders; number of stakeholders/participants reached	Ongoing
AKRO	1. Increase in-person and virtual engagement with Indigenous groups in underserved communities where management actions have greater impacts to these communities	Underserved communities have more opportunity to engage with agency staff to share concerns and develop solutions to management actions that may have negative impacts while emphasizing management actions that have beneficial impacts to Native communities	Number of in-person and virtual engagement meetings/sessions with Indigenous groups in underserved communities; number of underserved communities reached	Ongoing and expand 1-3 years
EEJ WG/ALL	1a. Recognize challenges of reaching rural communities by more effective use of appropriate technologies (e.g., telephone calls, local newspapers and radio and regional contacts/communications networks, Facebook)	Underserved communities have better access to science and management by enabling NOAA Fisheries engagement through more diverse, culturally appropriate venues or forums	Creation of a shareable list of local newspapers, radio stations, and community event forums for posting on AKRO and AFSC intranet	1-2 year
ALL	1b. Create informal engagement opportunities for scientists and managers to build trust directly with Indigenous and underserved communities over time, and preferably not in a time of conflict or crisis. Focus on building lines of communication with groups that have not historically been included in research	Relationship building with Indigenous groups including regulated and/or underserved communities	Reported improved relationship between scientists, managers, and communities	Ongoing
ALL	2. Increase transparency of NOAA Fisheries science and management by inviting local commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishermen to NOAA Fisheries offices to showcase what we do (e.g, Kodiak, Juneau, Unalaska, Little Port Walter)	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them	Number of underserved community visitors	Ongoing

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AFSC & AKRO Communications/ ALL	3. Explore and implement additional opportunities to expand outreach and education to underserved communities throughout Alaska through educational events including but not limited to Sea Week, Juneau (1970-present); Bering Sea Days, St. Paul Island (2010-2019); Barrow Arctic Research Center (BARC) Science Fair, Utqiagvik; Curiosity Unleashed, Juneau; Juneau School District Family STEAM events; Native Village of Solomon Outreach event; Sitka Whalefest, Belugas Count	Relationship building and raised awareness of NOAA Fisheries in Alaska	Number of engagement activities with underserved communities Number of attendees in each engagement Number of underserved communities represented at each engagement	1-2 year and ongoing
AFSC Communications/ AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator	4. Support virtual learning opportunities through in-classroom webinars (e.g., NOAA Live Alaska, Facebook Live events) to reach rural communities featuring scientists and Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge holders sharing information on Alaska marine ecosystems	Builds relationships with local communities; exposes students to different ways of knowing	Number of webinars that incorporate STEAM and Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge	Ongoing
SFD	5. Increase early outreach efforts to provide information sharing with the fishing community in accessible and culturally appropriate formats on rules and regulations. This includes translations for two-pager	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of science and management that affects them	Number of engagement activities to share fishing rules and regulations with fishing community Number of locations where accessible materials are available for fishing community Number of resources translated	Ongoing
ALL	6. Provide plain language and translation and interpretation of materials and presentations where needed and appropriate	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of science and management that affects them	Culturally and linguistically appropriate services provided to Alaska communities	Ongoing
SFD	6a. Develop language-accessible protected species interaction training for pelagic and bottom trawl and longline fishing crew and seafood processing plant workers that includes translations, interpretation, and accessible resources	Provides for increased understanding of federal requirements by fishermen and seafood processing plant workers, including foreign language-speaking participants in the fishery	Number of crew with limited English proficiency reached Number of trainings held with language access Number of resources and materials translated	2-4 years

## C. Improve access to education and technical training programs for underserved communities

National EEJ Outreach and Engagement Actions: 5, 7, 8, 11

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
AKRO RA/AFSC DIR-OMI	1. Provide training for communities on how to navigate federal application systems, including grant and NEPA training	Increased access to federal applications systems to underserved communities	Number of people trained from underserved communities	Ongoing
AFSC Communications/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator	2. Continue to support NOAA Science Camp scholarship program for underserved communities	Provides opportunities for campers to learn about NOAA research and student and career opportunities	Number of middle and high school students participating from underserved communities	2003 to present
FMA/AFSC BOD/AKRO RA/SFD	3. Support the development and continuation of the Marine Resources and Education Program (MREP) in Alaska	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them, and are better able to engage. IK is included	Number of trainings and activities supported for MREP	2023, 2024 Ongoing
OMD/OMI	4. Establish a targeted recruitment plan for underrepresented students including expanding existing internship and fellowship program opportunities (across Alaska) and have dedicated funding for this	Removal of barriers for underserved community members to apply and participate in internship and fellowship programs	Increased representation of underserved communities in internships and fellowship programs  Number of new recruitment strategies deployed for underrepresented students	1-2 years
ALL	4a. Actively maintain a list of shovel-ready projects for potential future interns, especially from the Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions (EPP/MSI)	Increased career opportunities for underserved communities	Increase in number of students from underserved communities participating in internships and projects	Ongoing
OMI/OMD/AFSC Communications	4b. Expand student internships and project opportunities to smaller, resource-limited institutions and other organizations (e.g., Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program Summer Bridge Internship, North Pacific Research Board Internship Pilot, Inclusive NOAA Fisheries Internship (IN FISH) Program, NOAA Educational	Provides some opportunities for students in Alaska to remain there, and would allow interns who are already working to keep their jobs (and their associated benefits, seniority, income, etc.)  Increased career opportunities for underserved communities	Increase in number of students from underserved communities participating in internships and projects	Ongoing

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
	<p>Partnership Program with Minority-Serving Institutions</p> <p>Alaska Sea Grant Community-Engaged Internship; Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) Summer Internships - High School; University of Washington Cooperative Institute for Climate, Ocean and Ecosystem Studies (CICOES) Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Internship Program; and University of Chicago Metcalf Program</p> <p>Have a physical presence at these institutions when advertising positions to have in-person interaction with students and faculty</p>			
ALL	4c. Find ways to promote NOAA as a career opportunity for students with local cultural knowledge, including formal internship programs or partnerships with secondary schools, community colleges, and universities	Increased career opportunities for underserved communities	Increase in number of students from underserved communities participating in internships and projects	Ongoing
AFSC Communications Program/AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator/ALL	5. Develop culturally responsive curriculum with community members and educators	Culturally responsive practices in the classroom increase student engagement, motivation, sense of belonging, and strengthen student identities, reading comprehension, and mathematical thinking. Strengthen our own understanding of local cultures and traditions and fosters NOAA-community partnerships	<p>Number of new curriculums developed</p> <p>Number of Alaska classrooms using the curriculum</p>	Ongoing

## 5. Equitably Distribute Benefits

### A. Improve access and remove barriers to federal government resources

National EEJ Benefits Actions: 1, 2, 3, 5

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	1. Incorporate EEJ considerations into resource allocation decision-making to improve equitable distribution, to the extent consistent with applicable law	Increased equity in distribution of benefits	Number of EEJ considerations incorporated into resource allocation decision-making	1-2 years and ongoing
EEJ WG/EEJ Coordinator/Communications Teams/ALL	2. Develop a mechanism to remove barriers for underserved community members to participate in federal meetings and programs (e.g., use telephone conference calls, mailings, compressed PDFs)	Increased access to federal meeting and programs for underserved communities	% of meetings held that include culturally appropriate incentives Number of meetings that use communications modes that recognize technology limitations of rural Alaska	1-2 years
RA/BOD OMD/OMI	3. Develop a process for contracting local businesses and community members for their services including for printed materials, invited speakers, culturally appropriate trainings and meetings. Work through NOAA AGO to collaborate with the DoC/NOAA Small Business Team	Supports small local businesses and economies Supports relationships between NMFS and communities	Contracting process created and increase in collaborative relationships	1-2 years
OMD/OMI	4. Remove barriers and identify solutions to increase purchase card actions with local vendors, small businesses, and businesses from underserved communities	Procurement contracts available to local businesses and community members	Increased number of procurement actions with local vendors, small businesses, and businesses from underserved communities	1-3 years
OMD/OMI	5. Identify underserved communities, biases, and limitations in the federal financial assistance program and develop processes to remove barriers to access	Increased accessibility of financial assistance program to underserved communities	Increase in number of successful applicants from underserved communities in the federal financial assistance program	1-3 years

## 6. Inclusive Governance

### A. Establish and build relationships to improve inclusive decision-making

National EEJ Inclusive Governance Actions: 1, 2,4

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
ALL	1. Support and facilitate Alaska representation on regional, national, and international advisory bodies	Increase representation of Alaska fishing communities in decision-making	Increase in % of Alaska representatives on regional, national, and international advisory bodies	Ongoing
AKRO	1a. Continue to elevate the importance of diverse representation on NPFMC to Secretary of Commerce and State of Alaska, specifically encourage appointment of an Indigenous community member to the Council	Advance EEJ through our participation and incorporation of EEJ in science and management through the Council Process	At least one Indigenous community member appointed to the Council	Ongoing
PRD/SFD/HCD	2. Meaningfully involve Indigenous and underserved groups in the regulatory process, where feasible, and especially early in the preparation process	Reduce or eliminate the appearance of arbitrary and noninclusive decisions	% of regulatory processes that include early engagement with Indigenous or underserved groups	Ongoing
PRD	3. Establish new co-management agreements (e.g., interest expressed in Kodiak/SE Alaska with loss of harbor seal co-management org)	Increase representation of Alaska Indigenous communities in decision-making about subsistence resources	New agreement established; secure additional funding; number of meetings held	3 years/ Needs future funding



## B. Improve opportunities for inclusive governance in public processes

National EEJ Inclusive Governance Actions: 1,4, 7

Responsibility	Actions	EEJ Impact	Metric	Timeframe
EEJ WG	1. Develop a plan to make public meetings and hearings more accessible. This includes creating space for informal engagement and accessible locations and platforms for local translations	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of science and management that affects them	Plan developed and utilized for public meetings and hearings	1-3 years
AFSC Tribal Research Coordinator	2. Establish a steering committee/advisory group for research	Improved opportunities for inclusive governance in public processes Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them	Increase in-person meetings with underserved communities and opportunities for active input and understanding of tribal perspectives	3 years
SFD/PRD/HCD	3. Improve accessibility and equity in rules and regulations by:  Seeking and considering views and input from affected communities in rulemaking through engagement and consultation, consistent with applicable laws and guidance  Increasing opportunities for underserved communities to provide comments on rulemaking packages, consistent with applicable laws and guidance  Creating two-pager summary guides for proposed rules with regulatory changes, and providing translated materials as appropriate	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of science and management that affects them; assist in incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge	% of rule and regulation packages that incorporate EEJ best practices	Ongoing