Message

From: Pirzadeh, Michelle [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=2AE309E0A52A42CD847709B39BC2239A-PIRZADEH, MICHELLE]
Sent: 1/25/2021 3:49:11 PM
To: Baca, Andrew [Baca.Andrew@epa.gov]
Subject: FW: Answering President Biden's EJ Mandate - an appeal for your leadership

FYI

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From: Lee, Charles <Lee.Charles@epa.gov>
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 7:30 AM
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Subject: RE: Answering President Biden's EJ Mandate - an appeal for your leadership

Colleagues

Last Friday, OEJ announced a public facing EJ and Systemic Racism Speaker Series. The first set of sessions will focus on redlining and current environmental challenges, particularly the climate crisis. The first session will feature The Mapping Inequality Project and is scheduled for March 4. We urge you to send the notice to all members in your organization with a personal note of support from you. Matt Tejada and I had made a point to the transition team about the existing groundswell of innate desire and palpable passion among EPA staff for addressing the issue of systemic racism when we started this conversation last summer. We can now demonstrate and amplify this to the incoming new leadership with an agency-wide display of your open, affirmative and collective commitment to this important Presidential priority.

Best regards
Charles

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is launching the Environmental Justice (EJ) and Systemic Racism Speaker Series by featuring The Mapping Inequality Project on March 4, 2021 at 12:00 – 1:00 pm EST. This unique collaboration created a foundational resource for unprecedented research, education, organizing, and policy advocacy on redlining and current environmental challenges. It provides publicly accessible digitized versions of redlining maps for about 200 cities. This has already generated an explosion of trailblazing work in the area of EJ and systemic racism. Project co-founders Robert Nelson, University of Richmond, and LaDale Winling, Virginia Tech, will discuss the genesis, philosophy, methodology, and impact of this game changing project. **REGISTER NOW!** Please share with colleagues and networks.

The objectives of this speaker series are:

- Provide information on groundbreaking, cutting-edge work in science, policy and practice to strengthen the evidentiary link between historical inequities and current environmental conditions;
- Inspire leaders and staff in communities, academia, business and industry, and civil society to think about how systemic racism relates to their own work by hearing from leading national policy experts, researchers and practitioners;
- Align government leaders and staff with the leading work taking place in this area and create a cohesive environment for fruitful partnerships; and
- Create intellectual ferment about dealing with systemic racism in a rigorous manner so that EPA and other environmental agencies can overcome their historical aversion to talking about race and systemic racism.

We begin this series with a set of five sessions that thoroughly examines the relationship of redlining and current environmental challenges, particularly the climate crisis. A recent National Center for Civil and Human Rights webinar on EJ, redlining and the climate crisis provides a good overview of this subject. Future topics will include: Title VI and civil rights program, EJ research and analysis, rural inequities, and others. Suggestions are welcomed. Registration information for each session forthcoming. For more information, contact Charles Lee or Sabrina Johnson.

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From: Tejada, Matthew <Tejada.Matthew@epa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 12:45 PM
Subject: Answering President Biden's EJ Mandate - an appeal for your leadership

Colleagues,

First, I hope you are all safe and well and as excited as we are in the EJ Program about the prospect of making an enormous leap forward on delivering EPA's mission for our country's people of color, indigenous and low-income communities in a new and powerful way. And that work begins right now.

Several of the executive orders signed by President Biden in the past 24 hours have serious implications for achieving such an enormous leap forward. EPA can and will play a meaningful role in the new forums and bodies established. **That role must be one of leadership** – across the federal family in these new bodies and initiatives in addition to setting an example for what the serious integration of equity and justice looks like for a federal agency. There is not a single program, office, branch, or division in EPA that I can think of which does not have some role to play in this work.

Conversations are already happening regarding the resources EPA will require to adequately and successfully meet the mandate of thoroughly integrating EJ throughout our work. It is absolutely critical that we have more resources – FTE, support, travel, etc. – for the work of EJ to be implemented by the national programs and regions. Please know that attaining resources for all of us to more seriously pursue environmental justice is at the very top of my list of priorities.

However, I do not believe we can wait for the new resources to arrive before we begin this work in earnest. So I am appealing to all of you in your leadership capacities to start that work today in several ways:

1. Identify individuals with leadership authority within your organizations to begin to "wear the EJ hat" immediately. Each region and program has an EJ Coordinator in some capacity, but they should be there to coordinate EJ efforts across an organization, not to lead the actual integration of EJ in the work on their own. They need partners to work with to develop those opportunities and they will need your personal involved leadership to actually implement the ideas.
2. Convene or re-establish an EJ council/forum/body for your overall organization to bring together the managers and staff who will be responsible for pursuing EJ integration along with you all as leaders to identify and prioritize opportunities to meaningfully integrate EJ in your work.
3. Convene a larger conversation or series of conversations open to all members of your organization along with regional program counterparts to discuss ideas and opportunities to integrate EJ in your work. Over the past couple of years I have personally heard many ideas that can be seized on immediately to advance EJ integration. The ideas are out there (many of them from junior staff in the regions). We need to identify them and make decisions to move on them. I need your leadership in doing this.
4. Much of our work begins with using previously developed tools for EJ, chief among them EJSCREEN. Developing a consistent and meaningful programmatic use of EJSCREEN to begin considering EJ integration is a great place to start.

OECA has recently reconvened their EJ Council, which has already developed the attached working list of ideas. Please note this is a first draft and will be further crafted and prioritized, but I thought it a great example of the kind of action and thinking we need to start putting on paper, framing up, and moving on right now.

As you begin this work, **please reach out and involve your already established EJ Coordinators and Managers**. We have had numerous conversations in the EJ Program over recent months focused on our strategic priorities. Your EJ Coordinators and Managers are ready to help inform your thinking so that we have a consistent and meaningful effort.

The EJ Program is here to support you in this work, but we cannot integrate EJ throughout EPA alone. We need each one of you in your leadership capacities to answer this call. If any of you would like to discuss, have questions, or desire my participation in a forum or conversation, please let me know. That is why I am here, why OEJ is here, and why the EJ program has worked hard over the past four years to be in the strongest position possible to act in this moment.

I want to end this message with a few of the words from President Biden's inaugural that I thought were particularly poignant for the moment we are in and the work that is before us:

Folks, this is a time of testing. We face an attack on our democracy and on truth, a raging virus, growing inequity, the sting of systemic racism, a climate in crisis, America's role in the world. Any one of these will be enough to challenge us in profound ways. But the fact is, we face them all at once, presenting this nation with one of the gravest responsibilities we've had. Now we're going to be tested. Are we going to step up? All of us? It's time for boldness, for there is so much to do. And this is certain, I promise you: We will be judged, you and I, by how we resolve these cascading crises of our era. Will we rise to the occasion is the question. Will we master this rare and difficult hour? Will we meet our obligations and pass along a new and better world to our children? I believe we must. I'm sure you do as well. I believe we will. And when we do, we'll write the next great chapter in the history of the United States of America.

Sincerely,

Matthew

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Pronouns: he, him, his

For up-to-date information, subscribe to EPA's Environmental Justice listserv by sending a blank email to: join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov