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# National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

A Report for the People's Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Prepared by the Research Team at the Tishman Environment and Design Center

## Introduction

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### Purpose

The *National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice* was developed as an initial framework to support the goals of the People's Environmental Justice Advisory Council (PEJAC) by elevating high-level environmental justice (EJ) priorities and recommendations to the national stage. Grounded in the lived experiences of frontline communities, the priorities outlined here emerged from a synthesis of personal testimonies shared by local EJ leaders, organizers, and residents during the first People's Hearing, held in North Carolina on June 10–11, 2025 and also includes information on past, existing, and proposed federal policies, programs, and regulations that could be developed, enhanced, or revised to advance environmental justice priorities. These proposed priorities and policy recommendations represent a starting point for PEJAC members to review, debate, refine, and evolve as additional input is gathered. They provide a preliminary model for shaping national policy, funding, and organizing efforts that align with EJ principles and the goals of EJ communities.<sup>1</sup>

As additional People's Hearings are held in the coming year, this proposed framework will continue to grow, incorporating new perspectives and policy solutions informed by the organizing and lived experiences of EJ groups across different regions.

### Methods and Limitations

The first People's Hearing in North Carolina brought together nearly 500 frontline residents, EJ advocates, and organizers to bear witness, share lived experiences, and elevate community-driven solutions to environmental injustices, with 130 attendees signed up to speak. The ten priority areas presented in this document were developed through a classification and thematic analysis of the individual testimonies taken from the main hearing room. These testimonies were recorded and synthesized by notetakers from the Tishman Environment and Design Center, the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN), and volunteers coming from Michigan. Through a collaborative coding and review process, the Tishman Center's research team organized the recurring EJ issues, demands, and proposed solutions into overarching thematic "buckets" that reflect the concerns and priorities voiced by the participants in the People's Hearing. Subsequently, additional secondary research was conducted on past, existing, and proposed federal policies, programs, and regulations that could be developed, enhanced, or revised to advance these environmental justice priorities. This methodology centers lived experience as a core data source and affirms grassroots leadership in shaping a national EJ agenda grounded in justice and equity.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this framework, "EJ Community" refers to a geographically or culturally distinct community that is predominantly composed of people of color and/or low-income households, who live at the direct intersection of environmental hazards and socio-economic vulnerability. EJ communities experience disproportionate exposure to pollution, are at the frontlines of climate impacts, and other environmental harms, while often having limited influence in environmental decision-making.

## Priorities Framework Summary Table

Priority	Description	NC Topics
<b>Legacy Pollution and Cumulative Impacts</b>	Addresses generations of environmental racism and pollution burden, calling for full cleanups, remediation, restoration, and reparative policies, as well as the incorporation of protections against cumulative impacts into permitting frameworks.	Superfund Sites; Coal Ash; PFAS; Legacy Waste; Brownfields; Cumulative Impacts; Landfills
<b>Equitable Infrastructure and Land Use</b>	Opposes harmful zoning practices and the development of major infrastructure, such as highways, pipelines, and goods movement hubs, near fenceline communities, and calls for community-driven, equitable planning, green infrastructure, and land-use reform.	Transportation Equity; Climate-Adaptive Design; Anti-Displacement Policies; Land Loss Prevention; Zoning
<b>Climate Resilience and Adaptation</b>	Centers community-based responses to climate impacts, including heat, storms, fires, and flooding, prioritizing infrastructure, housing, and funding that build long-term safety and well-being.	Disaster Management; Housing Protections; Heat Issues; Flooding
<b>Just and Renewable Energy Systems</b>	Focuses on democratizing energy access, opposes fossil fuel and other extractive infrastructure (such as methane pipelines and mega gas stations), promotes public and community-owned renewables, especially decentralized and distributed alternatives such as rooftop solar and battery energy storage, heat pumps, among other options, and resists climate policies that produce harmful community, environmental, and health impacts.	Decentralized/distributed Renewable Energy; Energy Affordability; Biogas; Energy Democracy; Wood Pellets; Methane Pipelines; Utility Justice
<b>Sustainable Agriculture and Food Justice</b>	Addresses the harms of industrial agriculture (i.e., CAFOs) on land, water, workers, and communities, especially for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, and low-wealth communities, while advancing agroecological and just food systems.	CAFOs; Pesticide Exposure; Biogas From Manure; Food Apartheid; Indigenous and Black Land Sovereignty
<b>Community Health and Safety</b>	Acknowledges the connection between environmental justice and public and occupational health, demanding healthcare to address health conditions, chronic disease clusters, underserved areas, and unsafe labor conditions rooted in racial and economic inequality, as well as exposure mitigation through emergency planning and improved communication (including notice requirements) for hazardous releases and other adverse events.	Cancer Clusters; Asthma Zones; Heat Protections; Avian Flu Risk in Poultry Workers; Lack of Rural Health Services
<b>Economic Justice and Funding</b>	Calls for redirecting public and private climate investments toward the benefit of frontline communities. Emphasizes community ownership, good jobs, and equitable access to resources.	Community-Owned; Direct Funding; Participatory Budgeting; Green Jobs
<b>Air and Water Quality/Access</b>	Protects clean air and water as fundamental rights. Prioritizes enforcement in communities disproportionately affected by industrial and polluting sources, as well as failing infrastructure. Ensuring clean drinking water and banning harmful chemicals from entering our air and water.	Water Access & Affordability; Air Pollution; Industrial Runoff (PFAS); Local Testing And Monitoring
<b>Community Power and Civic Engagement</b>	Strengthens procedural justice by ensuring frontline communities have meaningful roles in decisions, enforcement, and oversight.	Voting Rights; Participatory Planning; Intergenerational Engagement & Learning; Community Advisory Boards

## National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

<b>Land Stewardship and Self-Determination</b>	Affirms the right of Indigenous peoples and communities of color to control and care for land. Prioritizes decolonized land practices and environmental governance.	Indigenous Sovereignty; Land Back; Community Land Trusts; Black Farmers/Land Restoration; Cultural Land Practices
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 1

Priorities Framework Summary Table..... 2

Legacy Pollution And Cumulative Impacts..... 5

Equitable Infrastructure And Land Use..... 6

Climate Resilience And Adaptation..... 7

Just And Renewable Energy Systems..... 8

Sustainable Agriculture And Food Justice..... 9

Community Health And Safety..... 10

Economic Justice And Funding..... 12

Air And Water Quality/Access..... 13

Community Power And Civic Engagement..... 14

Land Stewardship And Self-Determination..... 15

Appendix A: Glossary and Resources..... 16

## Legacy Pollution And Cumulative Impacts

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### Priority Description

Addresses generations of environmental racism and pollution burden, calling for full cleanups, remediation, restoration, and reparative policies, as well as the incorporation of protections against cumulative impacts into permitting frameworks.

### Policy Solutions

#### 1. Remediate Contaminated Land and Water with Community Leadership

Expand funding and oversight of legacy pollution cleanups, including military contamination, through programs like the EPA's Superfund and Brownfields initiatives. These efforts must go beyond technical remediation by requiring transparent timelines, public access to environmental data, and direct community engagement throughout the process. Federal policy should also support funding for community-based organizations to serve as technical advisors and facilitators, ensuring that local voices guide cleanup priorities and decisions.

#### 2. Require Denials of Environmental Permits in Certain Conditions based on Cumulative Impacts (CI)

Track and engage in federal legislative efforts to reform decision-making processes for environmental permits, protecting communities from cumulative impacts. Such efforts include the proposed CI amendments to the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act in the A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act (formerly S. 919, 118th Congress, also known as 'EJ for All'). Assessments should be required in areas with overlapping pollution sources and communities exposed to high pollution levels, with an emphasis on rural, tribal, and EJ communities. Federal agencies, including the EPA, HUD, and the Army Corps of Engineers, should also integrate cumulative impact assessments (CIAs) and health impact assessments (HIAs) into their environmental review processes under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and within their respective processes. Community-submitted data and lived experience should be considered critical inputs in these assessments.

#### 3. Enforce Accountability for Industrial Polluters

Advocate for Congress to pass legislation that embeds environmental justice principles more systematically within the Department of Justice's enforcement framework, particularly to strengthen Title VI enforcement, and to consider provisions such as those proposed in the Empowering and Enforcing Environmental Justice Act (S.720, 119th Congress, 2025), including the establishment of an Office of Environmental Justice within the DOJ. In addition to this, strengthen enforcement of environmental regulations by expanding EPA inspections, requiring safe decommissioning and closure plans, and partnering with state Attorneys General to uphold legal decisions that protect overburdened communities. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act should be enforced to challenge environmental permitting decisions that result in racially disproportionate pollution burdens.

## Equitable Infrastructure And Land Use

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### Priority Description

Opposes harmful zoning practices and the development of major infrastructure, such as highways, pipelines, and goods movement hubs, near fenceline communities, and calls for community-driven, equitable planning, green infrastructure, and land-use reform.

### Policy Solutions

#### 1. Tie Federal Infrastructure Funding to Inclusive and Equitable Land Use Practices

Condition funding for infrastructure and land development projects on demonstrated compliance with equity standards. Federal agencies such as the Department of Transportation (DOT), HUD, and EPA should require meaningful community engagement in planning, prioritizing projects that reduce racial and spatial disparities, and ensuring that environmental justice communities benefit from federal investments. Projects funded through future legislative packages (such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)) and other major funding streams should be assessed for equity impacts before funds are awarded.

#### 2. Enforce Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Compliance in Land Use Policy

Formalize civil rights and environmental justice impact assessments as mandatory requirements for federally funded land use and infrastructure projects. These assessments must include enforceable criteria (not voluntary guidance) for identifying disparate impacts and cumulative burdens, independent review from a community oversight board, and full public transparency. To prevent agencies from siding with polluters, the DOJ and the EPA should increase proactive investigations. Federal funding to industrial companies should be tied to a clear track record of compliance with anti-discrimination and environmental justice laws.

#### 3. Expand Support for Public and Community Ownership and Cooperative Infrastructure Models

Increase funding and technical assistance for land trusts, housing cooperatives, and community infrastructure owned or governed by local residents. HUD and USDA Rural Development can play a role in expanding access to land and capital for Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color that have been historically dispossessed of land and denied infrastructure investment.

## Climate Resilience And Adaptation

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### Priority Description

Centers community-based responses to climate impacts, including heat, storms, fires, hurricanes, and flooding, prioritizing infrastructure, housing, and funding that build long-term safety and well-being.

### Policy Solutions

#### 1. Fund Community-Led Climate Resilience and Disaster Preparedness

Provide direct federal grants (via Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the DOE) to support community-led climate resilience initiatives. Funding should prioritize neighborhood-based resilience networks and the creation of resilience hubs that offer services such as cooling centers, emergency power, and food storage in frontline communities.

#### 2. Strengthen Emergency Planning and Public Accountability

Require local emergency planning committees (LEPCs) under EPCRA to produce and regularly update community-informed emergency response plans, include representation from vulnerable populations, hold regular public meetings, and submit annual updates. Continued federal funding (e.g., FEMA or Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grants) should be contingent on compliance with these public accountability standards.

#### 3. Ensure Equitable Post-Disaster Recovery and Infrastructure Rebuilding

Federal recovery programs, such as FEMA's Public and Individual Assistance programs and HUD's Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR), should be required to prioritize the distribution of renewable energy, including rooftop solar and battery energy storage systems, as well as the rebuilding of essential community infrastructure. This includes affordable housing, schools, trauma-informed care services, and mental health support, with additional investment in green workforce development linked to recovery efforts.

#### 4. Incentivize State and Local Climate Resilience Plans

Create competitive grants or formula-based funding (through the EPA, DOE, or FEMA) for state and local climate adaptation plans that are community-driven, equity-centered, aligned with updated Justice40 principles, and co-developed with frontline and historically excluded communities.

## Just And Renewable Energy Systems

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### Priority Description

Focuses on democratizing energy access, opposes fossil fuel and other extractive infrastructure (such as methane pipelines and mega gas stations), promotes public and community-owned decentralized/distributed renewables, and resists climate policies that produce harmful community, environmental, and health impacts.

### Federal Policy Solutions

**1. Expand Funding for Energy Conservation, Efficiency, and Literacy Programs, Public and Community-Owned Decentralized/Distributed Renewable Energy Projects.**

Direct federal grants and financing (e.g., through the Department of Energy (DOE) or the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Program) to support energy conservation, efficiency, and literacy programs, the development of public and community-owned decentralized/distributed solar, wind, and microgrid systems, especially in EJ and rural communities.

**2. Mandate Inclusive Energy Governance in Federal Clean Energy Programs**

Resource and require community participation and representation in federally funded energy planning processes to promote energy planning and decision-making through formal mechanisms such as public advisory boards, public comment periods, regional town halls, and community listening sessions. These participatory processes should be designed to ensure that frontline and EJ communities are equipped with the necessary information and have opportunities to provide meaningful input into how energy investments are shaped, prioritized, and evaluated. Communities should have the right, under certain circumstances, such as when a project would emit pollution into their neighborhoods, to refuse that project.

**3. Establish National Standards for Equitable Energy Transition**

Develop federal guidelines that define "clean" and "just" energy to exclude technologies such as waste incineration, biomass, carbon capture, or nuclear that may cause environmental or public health harm in frontline communities. Eliminate financial incentives and policy mechanisms that treat these approaches as if they are "clean."

**4. Invest in Renewable Energy Workforce Training in EJ Communities**

Expand support through agencies like the Department of Labor and DOE for targeted job training and apprenticeships in the renewable energy sector, prioritizing communities historically impacted by energy extraction or pollution.



## Sustainable Agriculture And Food Justice

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### Priority Description

Addresses the harms of industrial agriculture (i.e., CAFOs) on land, water, workers, and communities, especially for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant, and low-wealth communities, while advancing agroecological and just food systems.

### Policy Solutions

#### 1. Remove Regulatory Loopholes for Industrial Food Animal Production

Advocate for Congress to amend and reverse the exemptions put in place by the Fair Agricultural Reporting Method (FARM) Act passed in 2018 that shield Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) from environmental reporting under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (also known as CERCLA or Superfund) and the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), and oversight under the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

#### 2. Fund Community-Led Research on Industrial Agriculture Impacts

Establish dedicated USDA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant programs for community-owned research on the environmental and health impacts of industrial agriculture (e.g., animal waste lagoons, use of veterinary drugs, pesticide use, agricultural run-off, noxious odors), with priority for frontline communities. Federal agencies should also support integration of community-driven findings into federal regulatory and enforcement decisions (e.g., EPA rulemakings, USDA conservation priorities).

#### 3. Strengthen Federal Labor Standards for Farmworkers

Advocate for Congress to expand labor protections for migrant workers, such as amending the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act, and updating OSHA regulations. These reforms should include establishing a national minimum legal age for agricultural work, aligning it with the standards applied to non-agricultural industries. In addition, Congress should mandate national protections against pesticide exposure, including enforceable buffer zones, safety training, and access to personal protective equipment. Finally, federal law must strengthen enforcement of standards related to migrant housing, extreme heat protections, and the guarantee of livable wages for all farmworkers.

#### 4. Support Regenerative and Indigenous Agriculture through Farm Bill Programs and Federal Food Access and Nutrition Programs

Reform USDA programs (e.g., Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program) to fund regenerative practices, better support Black, Indigenous, and cooperative farmers, and recognize and support Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and culturally relevant food systems. Expand federal food programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Women, Infants, and Children program, and the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program to prioritize and increase access to fresh, nutrient-dense foods from local BIPOC farmers. Incentivize institutional procurement at the federal level (e.g., hospitals, prisons) from regenerative, community-based, and small-scale producers.

## Community Health And Safety

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### Priority Description

Links environmental justice to public and occupational health, demanding healthcare to address health conditions, chronic disease clusters, underserved areas, and unsafe labor conditions rooted in racial and economic inequality, as well as exposure mitigation through emergency planning and improved communication (including notice requirements) for hazardous releases and other adverse events.

### Policy Solutions

#### 1. Mandate Transparent and Proactive Public Notification of Hazardous Environmental Exposures

Strengthen and enforce public disclosure requirements under existing laws and regulatory frameworks, such as EPCRA and the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI). Require facilities to notify nearby communities of hazardous releases in real time, using clear and accessible formats. EPA should establish national standards for multilingual public alerts and require companies to report not only large releases but also chronic low-level exposures.

#### 2. Expand Healthcare Access for Underserved and Overburdened Communities

Federal agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should expand mobile clinics, community health centers, and public health surveillance in areas with high environmental health risks. This includes prioritizing funding for rural, tribal, and frontline communities through programs such as the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and incorporating environmental exposure history into federally funded health assessments and services.

#### 3. Codify Legally Enforceable Workplace Protections Against Environmental and Occupational Exposures

The DOL and OSHA should strengthen and enforce workplace health protections by creating legally binding exposure limits for hazardous chemicals, increasing the frequency of workplace inspections in high-risk industries, and requiring employers to disclose risks to workers. Worker protections must extend to subcontracted and temporary workers, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, waste management, and manufacturing, where exposure risks are particularly high. Additionally, many of OSHA's current permissible exposure limits (PELs) are decades old and do not reflect modern scientific understanding or cumulative exposure risks. OSHA could revise outdated PELs based on up-to-date public health research, establish cumulative exposure standards for workers exposed to multiple hazardous substances, and prioritize updates for industries with high EJ relevance (e.g., agriculture, waste, construction).

#### 4. Reduce Risks to Communities from Leaks, Spills, and Explosions at Chemical Plants and Other Hazardous Infrastructure

The EPA must strengthen and fully implement its Risk Management Program (RMP) rule to better protect communities living near high-risk chemical facilities. The recently finalized "Safer Communities by Chemical Accident Prevention" (2024) under the RMP was a critical step toward this goal, requiring facilities to adopt safer technologies and practices, conduct regular worst-case scenario assessments, and meaningfully engage local communities in emergency preparedness. The rule also mandates greater transparency through the RMP Public Data Tool, real-time hazard communication, and stronger

enforcement mechanisms for noncompliance. However, this rule is currently under reconsideration by the Trump administration, putting frontline communities at renewed risk of chemical disasters. Advocates must press for the rule's full enforcement and expansion, and push back against any attempts to weaken or rescind its provisions.

In addition, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) within the DOT must be empowered to improve pipeline safety standards, particularly in environmental justice, Indigenous, and rural communities. PHMSA should require comprehensive inspections of aging pipelines, enforce community notification protocols for leaks and incidents, and provide public access to risk maps. Stronger collaboration among EPA, PHMSA, and LEPCs is necessary to ensure timely and coordinated responses to chemical releases, infrastructure failures, and disaster events, particularly as the risk of climate-exacerbated industrial hazards increases. To support these efforts, Congress should advance legislative reforms and funding for pipeline safety, enabling the DOE and PHMSA to enhance leak detection, retrofit aging pipelines, and mitigate environmental and public health risks. The Next Generation Pipelines Research and Development Act (H.R. 2613) provides one example of how such policy measures could be structured.

## Economic Justice And Funding

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### Description

Calls for redirecting public and private climate investments toward the benefit of frontline communities. Emphasizes community ownership, good jobs, and equitable access to resources.

### Policy Solutions

#### **1. Protect and Expand Pathways for Community Ownership of Land, Housing, and Enterprises**

Increase funding and technical assistance for community land trusts, housing cooperatives, local worker-owned enterprises, and other shared-ownership models that allow communities to retain and control the wealth they generate. Federal courts and independent agencies, such as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the National Credit Union Administration, may retain some authority to defend community lending models and public asset ownership. Agencies such as HUD, USDA Rural Development, and the Department of Commerce should support these models through grant programs, loan guarantees, and procurement preferences that prioritize vulnerable frontline communities.

#### **2. Direct Federal Investments to Community-Led Economic Development and Climate Solutions**

With the dismantling of Justice40 and Inflation Reduction Act programs, advocacy must focus on challenging discriminatory or unlawful reallocation of federal funds. Federal infrastructure, climate, and recovery funding should be directed toward community-managed programs in areas such as land and water remediation, climate resilience, and just transition planning. Funding mechanisms should prioritize long-term, flexible, and general operating support to frontline groups, especially in communities that have historically been excluded from federal programs. Civil rights litigation, state Attorneys General, and oversight committees in Congress (where possible) can intervene when communities are excluded from infrastructure or environmental investments. Strategies should include Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, impact documentation, and public exposure of inequitable federal spending patterns.

#### **3. Reform Federal Property Valuation and Advocate for Protective Tax Policies and Relief Tools to Support Low-Wealth Communities**

Offer technical support and incentives to states and localities to adopt equity-based property valuation systems, particularly in gentrifying or disinvested areas where assessments often distort true market conditions. Even without a proactive climate policy, federal tax and housing policy can still be used to shield vulnerable communities from displacement. Advocacy should push for the expansion of federal tax relief mechanisms, like low-income housing tax credits, energy-efficiency rebates, and direct homeowner support. National coalitions should press Congress and the courts to amend the recent regressive tax reforms that exacerbate inequality or encourage land speculation in frontline communities.

## Air And Water Quality/Access

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### Description

Protects clean air and water as fundamental rights. Prioritizes enforcement in communities disproportionately affected by industrial and other polluting discharges and failing infrastructure.

### Policy Solutions

#### 1. Strengthen Air and Water Quality Standards to Reflect Co-occurring Burdens and Risk

The EPA, under the Clean Air Act (CAA), the Toxic Substances Control Act, SDWA, and other relevant environmental statutes, should update national air and water quality standards to ensure they adequately protect communities experiencing multiple and overlapping environmental and health burdens. Standards should be based on the latest science, with a precautionary approach to setting thresholds for pollutants such as lead, PM2.5, PFAS, and nitrates. Regulatory processes must prioritize the prevention of harm, recognizing that people and communities are not affected by a single pollutant at a time in isolation, but rather by co-occurring hazards, multiple exposures via different pathways, and other factors of susceptibility and vulnerability that can magnify the harm they experience.

#### 2. Expand and Integrate Community-Led Air and Water Monitoring for Environmental Justice

The federal government should increase funding for citizen science and community-based air quality monitoring through the EPA's small block grants programs, regional monitoring programs, and partnerships with universities, tribal entities, and community-based organizations. Resources should support low-cost sensor networks, public data platforms, and technical capacity building in frontline communities near highways, ports, refineries, industrial facilities, and other large sources of pollution. Routine, standardized testing for hazardous pollutants, such as lead, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and fine particulate matter (PM2.5), must be conducted in EJ-designated areas, schools, public housing, and high-risk zones. These efforts should be carried out by independent entities, with data formally integrated into EPA enforcement actions and permitting decisions. The EPA and CDC should also collaborate to develop a publicly accessible national dashboard that tracks air and water quality, as well as cumulative health risks, by census tract.

#### 3. Fund and Enforce Equitable Access to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

Advocate for Congress to pass legislation that significantly invests in drinking water and sewer infrastructure, with a focus on PFAS removal, lead pipe replacement, and support for low-income communities. The Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity and Reliability (WATER) Act, reintroduced by Sen. Sanders and Rep. Watson Coleman in May 2025, offers one model by proposing at least \$35 billion in dedicated funding for these priorities. Federal funding tools, such as the EPA's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the USDA's Rural Utilities Service, must be aligned with environmental justice goals, ensuring that these communities are not excluded from infrastructure planning and upgrades.

To protect public health, the EPA must also strengthen enforcement of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) and refrain from delegating enforcement authority (primacy) to state agencies with poor records on public health and environmental justice. In cases where such authority has already been granted, EPA should review and potentially revoke state primacy, giving serious weight to community concerns and documented failures.

#### 4. Close Loopholes That Exempt Polluting Facilities from Environmental Regulation

Congress must amend and end exemptions for specific industrial and agricultural facilities, such as CAFOs, from key provisions of the CAA and Clean Water Act (CWA). These facilities must be subject to the same permitting, emissions disclosure, and public notification standards as other regulated sectors.

## Community Power And Civic Engagement

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### Description

Strengthens procedural justice by ensuring frontline communities have meaningful roles in decisions, enforcement, and oversight.

### Policy Solutions

#### 1. Institutionalize Community Advisory Boards in Federally Funded Projects

Federal agencies, such as the EPA, DOT, HUD, and DOE, should require the creation of Community Advisory Boards (CABs) as a condition for receiving federal infrastructure, environmental, and energy funding in communities that are overburdened. These boards must have decision-making power, be adequately resourced with stipends and technical assistance, and accurately reflect local demographics, including residents most impacted by pollution, disinvestment, or climate-related risks. CABs should be integrated into long-term planning and oversight, rather than relying solely on short-term consultation and feedback.

#### 2. Support Participatory Budgeting and Community Control of Public Funds

Establish grant programs and incentives for local participatory budgeting (PB) initiatives, especially in communities that have faced systemic disinvestment. This includes funding for the infrastructure of civic engagement—such as multilingual outreach, facilitation training, digital tools, and youth engagement—and ensuring that PB processes can influence the allocation of climate, infrastructure, and health-related investments. Federal agencies can pilot PB within their own grantmaking, allowing grantees to co-develop funding priorities with communities.

#### 3. Enforce Moratorium Requirements and Prior Notification for Hazardous Projects

The federal government should require that any federally funded or permitted hazardous infrastructure projects (e.g., pipelines, waste facilities, polluting industries) include a moratorium period during which affected communities are formally notified and have opportunities to submit input before permitting decisions are made. Notifications must be multilingual, accessible, and include public hearings. Projects in designated environmental justice areas should be paused or denied if community opposition or cumulative harms are identified.

## Land Stewardship And Self-Determination

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### Description

Affirms the right of Indigenous peoples and communities of color to control and care for land. Prioritizes decolonized land practices and environmental governance.

### Policy Solutions

#### 1. Support and Institutionalize Indigenous and Black Land Stewardship Practices

Federal agencies, including the USDA, EPA, Department of the Interior (DOI), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), should formally recognize Black agrarian and Indigenous stewardship systems as legitimate and central to climate adaptation, environmental conservation, and food sovereignty goals. This includes creating co-management frameworks for public lands, funding Indigenous-led environmental restoration projects, and integrating TEK into federal land use planning and environmental assessments.

#### 2. Invest in Youth-Led and Intergenerational Cultural and Land-Based Programs

Establish programs that expose Black and Indigenous youth to environmental justice, cultural restoration, and land-based learning. This includes support through the Department of Education, EPA EJ programs, and the Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps), as well as partnerships with tribal colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), and land-grant institutions. These programs should center cultural survival, intergenerational knowledge sharing, and pathways to land and leadership opportunities.

#### 3. Return and Rematriate Land to Indigenous Peoples and Tribes

The federal government should take steps to return governance and ownership of federal lands to Tribal and Native Nations, especially lands seized by treaty violations, military actions, or settler encroachment. This can include restoring ancestral lands, expanding land-back provisions in federal conservation programs, and supporting the legal infrastructure for tribal stewardship. DOI and Congress should establish a permanent Land Back Fund to facilitate the voluntary transfer of lands held by public agencies or private entities to Indigenous governance.

## Appendix A: Glossary and Resources

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
A. Donald McEachin Environmental Justice for All Act (S.919, 118th Congress)	EJ for All Act	A proposed bill that aims to strengthen environmental justice protections, public health safeguards, and community participation.	Congress.gov. <a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/919">https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/919</a>
Army Corps of Engineers	USACE	A federal agency that provides engineering services, including civil works and military construction.	USACE. <a href="https://www.usace.army.mil/">https://www.usace.army.mil/</a>
Black, Indigenous, People of Color	BIPOC	A term used to recognize the unique experiences of Black, Indigenous, and other people of color.	Garcia, Sandra E. "Where did BIPOC come from?" <i>The New York Times</i> 17 (2020): 2020. <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html">https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html</a>
Bureau of Indian Affairs	BIA	An agency under the Department of the Interior providing services to American Indians, Native Tribes, Nations, and Alaska Natives.	BIA. <a href="https://www.bia.gov/">https://www.bia.gov/</a>
Clean Air Act	CAA	A foundational federal environmental law regulating air emissions from stationary and mobile sources. It defines EPA's responsibilities for protecting and improving the nation's air quality and the stratospheric ozone layer.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview">https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview</a>
Clean Water Act	CWA	A foundational federal environmental law governing water pollution to ensure clean surface waters.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act">https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act</a>
Community Advisory Boards	CABs	Groups of local residents providing input on development, environment, and policy decisions affecting their communities.	Newman, Susan D. et. al., "Community Advisory Boards in Community-Based Participatory Research: A Synthesis of Best Processes." <i>Preventing Chronic Disease</i> 8, no. 3 (2011): A70. <a href="https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3113359/">https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3113359/</a> .
Community Development Block Grant for Disaster Recovery	CDBG-DR	HUD-administered funds that help communities recover from disasters, especially for infrastructure and housing.	HUD Exchange. <a href="https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-dr/">https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/cdbg-dr/</a>



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Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act	CERCLA (Superfund)	A foundational federal EJ law that provides a federal 'Superfund' to clean up uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous-waste sites.	EPA. 'Superfund: CERCLA Overview.' <a href="https://www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-cercla-overview">https://www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-cercla-overview</a>
Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations	CAFOs	Large-scale industrial agricultural facilities that confine large numbers of animals for feeding.	Earthjustice, <i>Petition to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for a Presumption That CAFOs Using Wet Manure Management Systems Emit Dangerous Levels of Air Pollution</i> , October 2022. <a href="https://earthjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/cafo-presumptionpetition_with_exhibits_oct2022.pdf">https://earthjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/cafo-presumptionpetition_with_exhibits_oct2022.pdf</a> .
Conservation Stewardship Program	CSP	A USDA program that offers long-term financial and technical assistance to compensate agricultural and forest producers who agree to increase their level of conservation by adopting additional conservation activities.	USDA NRCS. <a href="https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship">https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/csp-conservation-stewardship</a>
Corporation for National and Community Service	CNCS (AmeriCorps)	A federal agency supporting volunteerism through programs like AmeriCorps.	AmeriCorps. <a href="https://www.americorps.gov/about/our-agency/cnsc">https://www.americorps.gov/about/our-agency/cnsc</a>
Cumulative Impacts and Cumulative Impact Assessments	CIA	Policies or Evaluations that consider combined health and environmental impacts of multiple pollution sources in a community.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-11/epa-interim-cumulative-impacts-framework-november-2024.pdf">https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-11/epa-interim-cumulative-impacts-framework-november-2024.pdf</a>
Department of Agriculture	USDA	The federal agency that develops and executes federal laws related to farming, forestry, and food.	U.S. Department of Agriculture. <a href="https://www.usda.gov/">https://www.usda.gov/</a>
Department of Education	ED	The federal agency that establishes policy for and administers federal assistance to education.	U.S. Department of Education. <a href="https://www.ed.gov/">https://www.ed.gov/</a>
Department of Energy	DOE	The federal agency responsible for U.S. energy policy and nuclear safety.	U.S. Department of Energy. <a href="https://www.energy.gov/">https://www.energy.gov/</a>
Department of Health and Human Services	HHS	The federal agency responsible for protecting the health of all Americans.	HHS. <a href="https://www.hhs.gov/">https://www.hhs.gov/</a>

## National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Department of Homeland Security	DHS	The federal agency responsible for public security, including disaster prevention and management.	DHS. <a href="https://www.dhs.gov/">https://www.dhs.gov/</a>
Department of Housing and Urban Development	HUD	The federal agency focused on national housing needs and improving access to fair and affordable housing.	HUD. <a href="https://www.hud.gov/">https://www.hud.gov/</a>
Department of Justice	DOJ	The federal agency responsible for the enforcement of law and the administration of justice.	U.S. DOJ. <a href="https://www.justice.gov/">https://www.justice.gov/</a>
Department of Labor	DOL	The federal agency that oversees labor standards, employment, and workplace safety.	U.S. DOL. <a href="https://www.dol.gov/">https://www.dol.gov/</a>
Department of the Interior	DOI	The federal agency responsible for the management of federal lands and natural resources.	U.S. DOI. <a href="https://www.doi.gov/">https://www.doi.gov/</a>
Department of Transportation	DOT	The federal agency responsible for the nation's transportation systems and infrastructure.	U.S. DOT. <a href="https://www.transportation.gov/">https://www.transportation.gov/</a>
Drinking Water State Revolving Fund	DWSRF	An EPA program that provides financial support to states for infrastructure improvements to public water systems.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/dwsrf">https://www.epa.gov/dwsrf</a>
Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act	EPCRA	A federal law requiring industries to report on the storage, use, and releases of hazardous substances to aid emergency planning.	EPA. 'Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA).' <a href="https://www.epa.gov/epcra">https://www.epa.gov/epcra</a>
Empowering and Enforcing Environmental Justice Act (S.720, 119th Congress, 2025)		A proposed federal bill to enhance enforcement mechanisms for environmental justice laws within the Department of Justice.	Congress.gov. <a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/720">https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/senate-bill/720</a>

## National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Environmental Justice Community	EJ Community	Although there are many definitions of an EJ community in policy and practice, for the purposes of this framework, it is referred to broadly as a geographically defined population that is composed significantly of individuals of color and/or low-income households, experience disproportionate exposure to pollution, are at the frontlines of climate impacts, and other environmental harms, while often having limited influence in environmental decision-making.	Ana Isabel Baptista et al., <i>Defining Environmental Justice Communities for EJ Policies</i> (Tishman Environment and Design Center, June 2021), <a href="https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d14dab43967cc000179f3d2/t/682cb3aa9e6e793b81491512/1747760042140/Defining+Environmental+Justice+Communities+for+EJ+Policies_Final+_June2021.pdf">https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d14dab43967cc000179f3d2/t/682cb3aa9e6e793b81491512/1747760042140/Defining+Environmental+Justice+Communities+for+EJ+Policies_Final+_June2021.pdf</a> .
Environmental Protection Agency	EPA	The federal agency tasked with environmental protection and enforcing regulations to reduce pollution.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/">https://www.epa.gov/</a>
Environmental Quality Incentives Program	EQIP	A USDA NRCS program that provides short-term financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers and non-industrial forest managers who agree to adopt new conservation practices.	NRCS USDA. <a href="https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives">https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/eqip-environmental-quality-incentives</a>
Fair Agricultural Reporting Method Act	FARM Act	A federal law that exempts farms from reporting emissions from animal waste under CERCLA and EPCRA.	Congress.gov. 'Fair Agricultural Reporting Method Act.' <a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2421">https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2421</a>
Fair Labor Standards Act	FLSA	A federal labor law that establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, and child labor protections.	U.S. DOL. <a href="https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa">https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa</a>
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	FDIC	The federal agency that insures deposits in banks and promotes financial stability.	FDIC. <a href="https://www.fdic.gov/">https://www.fdic.gov/</a>
Federal Emergency Management Agency	FEMA	A federal agency under DHS responsible for coordinating responses to disasters that overwhelm local resources.	FEMA. <a href="https://www.fema.gov/">https://www.fema.gov/</a>

## National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Freedom of Information Act	FOIA	A federal law that grants the public the right to access records from any federal agency, promoting transparency and accountability in government. It requires agencies to disclose information unless it falls under one of nine exemptions protecting interests such as personal privacy, national security, or law enforcement.	US DOJ. <i>The United States Department of Justice Guide to the Freedom of Information Act</i> . <a href="https://www.justice.gov/oip/doj-guide-freedom-information-act-0">https://www.justice.gov/oip/doj-guide-freedom-information-act-0</a>
Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program	GusNIP	A USDA program that supports projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers.	USDA NIFA. <a href="https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/gus-schumacher-nutrition-incentive-program">https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/gus-schumacher-nutrition-incentive-program</a>
Health Resources and Services Administration	HRSA	A federal agency under HHS that provides health care to people who are geographically isolated or economically or medically vulnerable.	HRSA. <a href="https://www.hrsa.gov/">https://www.hrsa.gov/</a>
Health Impact Assessments	HIA	Tools used to evaluate the potential health effects of a project or policy before it is built or implemented.	CDC. <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm">https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm</a>
Hispanic-Serving Institution	HSI	A U.S. college or university federally designated as such when at least 25% of its full-time undergraduate student body is Hispanic and a significant number of its students are low-income.	Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. <a href="https://hacu.net/research/hsi-definition/">https://hacu.net/research/hsi-definition/</a>
Historically Black Colleges and Universities	HBCUs	Colleges and universities established before 1964 with the principal mission of educating Black Americans.	U.S. Department of Education. <a href="https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/">https://sites.ed.gov/whhbcu/</a>
Inflation Reduction Act	IRA	A 2022 law that funds clean energy, environmental justice, and climate resilience programs.	Congress.gov. <a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5376">https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5376</a>
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act	IIJA	A 2021 bipartisan law, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), allocated billions of dollars in federal funding for infrastructure, including transportation, broadband, water, and energy.	Congress.gov. <a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684">https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684</a>

## National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Justice40		A federal initiative outlined in Biden's Executive Order 14096, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," aimed to deliver 40% of the benefits of climate and infrastructure investments to "disadvantaged communities."	The White House Archive. <a href="https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/">https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/</a>
Local Emergency Planning Committees	LEPCs	Community-based entities that develop emergency response plans for chemical hazards in coordination with first responders.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/epcra/local-emergency-planning-committees">https://www.epa.gov/epcra/local-emergency-planning-committees</a>
Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act	MSPA	A federal law offering employment protections to migrant and seasonal agricultural workers.	U.S. Department of Labor. <a href="https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/agriculture/mspa">https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/agriculture/mspa</a>
National Credit Union Administration	NCUA	A federal agency that regulates and insures credit unions.	NCUA. <a href="https://www.ncua.gov/">https://www.ncua.gov/</a>
National Environmental Policy Act	NEPA	A landmark environmental law that requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/nepa">https://www.epa.gov/nepa</a>
Next Generation Pipelines Research and Development Act (H.R. 2613, 2025)		A bipartisan pipeline safety bill that would authorize close to \$250 million for the DOE and PHMSA to fund a program to develop pipeline safety technologies to improve leak detection, retrofit existing pipelines, develop advanced manufacturing techniques, and reduce environmental impacts.	Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. <a href="https://science.house.gov/2025/4/h-r-2613-the-next-generation-pipelines-research-and-development-act">https://science.house.gov/2025/4/h-r-2613-the-next-generation-pipelines-research-and-development-act</a>
Occupational Safety and Health Administration	OSHA	An agency under DOL that ensures safe and healthy working conditions by setting and enforcing standards.	OSHA. <a href="https://www.osha.gov/">https://www.osha.gov/</a>
Participatory Budgeting	PBs	A democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget.	Participatory Budgeting Project. <a href="https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/">https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/</a>
Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances	PFAS	Synthetic chemicals linked to health risks found in water, soil, and the food supply.	EPA. <i>Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)</i> . <a href="https://www.epa.gov/pfas">https://www.epa.gov/pfas</a>

## National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Permissible Exposure Limits	PELs	OSHA-defined limits on the amount or concentration of a substance in the air to protect worker health.	OSHA. <i>Permissible Exposure Limits – Annotated Tables</i> . <a href="https://www.osha.gov/annotated-pels">https://www.osha.gov/annotated-pels</a>
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration	PHMSA	An agency under DOT that develops and enforces regulations for the safe transport of fuel and hazardous materials.	PHMSA. <a href="https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/">https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/</a>
Public Utilities Commission, Public Service Commission, or similar names	PUC	State-level agencies that regulate utilities such as electricity, gas, water, and telecommunications.	National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners. <a href="https://www.naruc.org/">https://www.naruc.org/</a>
Risk Management Program	RMP	An EPA program that requires industrial facilities to develop risk management plans for hazardous substances.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/rmp">https://www.epa.gov/rmp</a>
Rural Utilities Service	RUS	An agency under the USDA that provides infrastructure financing for utilities in rural communities.	USDA. <a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-utilities-service">https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/agencies/rural-utilities-service</a>
Safe Drinking Water Act	SDWA	A federal law that protects the quality of drinking water in the U.S.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/sdwa">https://www.epa.gov/sdwa</a>
Safer Communities by Chemical Accident Prevention Rule		EPA's 2024 rule update to strengthen chemical safety regulations under the Risk Management Program.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/rmp/safer-communities-chemical-accident-prevention">https://www.epa.gov/rmp/safer-communities-chemical-accident-prevention</a>  <i>Coming Clean, Trump Administration's Decision to Rehash Chemical Disaster Prevention Rules Will Endanger Millions of Workers and Fenceline Community Residents</i> , March 11, 2025. <a href="https://comingcleaninc.org/latest-news/in-the-news/trump-administrations-decision-to-rehash-chemical-disaster-prevention-rules-will-endanger-millions-of-workers-and-fenceline-community-residents">https://comingcleaninc.org/latest-news/in-the-news/trump-administrations-decision-to-rehash-chemical-disaster-prevention-rules-will-endanger-millions-of-workers-and-fenceline-community-residents</a> .
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	SNAP	A federal assistance program providing food-purchasing aid for low- and no-income individuals.	USDA FNS. <a href="https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program">https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program</a>

## National People's Policy Priorities for Environmental Justice

Term	Acronym or Alias	Definition	Links/Resources
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act		A federal provision that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs receiving federal funding.	U.S. Department of Justice. <a href="https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI">https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI</a>
Toxic Substances Control Act	TSCA	A federal law that regulates the introduction of new or already existing chemicals in the U.S.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/TSCA">https://www.epa.gov/TSCA</a>
Toxics Release Inventory	TRI	A resource that tracks the management of certain toxic chemicals that may pose a threat to health and the environment.	EPA. <a href="https://www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program">https://www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program</a>
Traditional Ecological Knowledge	TEK	Indigenous and local knowledge systems about ecosystems that are passed down through generations.	U.S. Fish & Wildlife. <a href="https://www.fws.gov/story/2022-06/what-traditional-ecological-knowledge">https://www.fws.gov/story/2022-06/what-traditional-ecological-knowledge</a>
USDA Rural Development	RD	An agency under the USDA that administers programs to improve the economy and quality of life in rural America.	USDA Rural Development. <a href="https://www.rd.usda.gov/">https://www.rd.usda.gov/</a>
Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability Act	WATER Act	A proposed federal bill that would provide funding and resources to improve drinking water and sewer infrastructure, focusing on PFAS removal, lead pipe replacement, and additional support for low-income and rural communities.	Congress.gov. <a href="https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/916">https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/916</a>
Women, Infants, and Children	WIC	A federal assistance program for healthcare and nutrition of low-income pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and children under five.	USDA FNS. <a href="https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic">https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic</a>