



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE REPORT

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GRANT PROGRAMS

The Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) offers small, community-based, not-for-profit, and Tribal Organizations a variety of competitive grants through its Environmental Justice Grant Programs. These grants help support and empower communities as they develop and implement programs that address environmental issues, harms, and health hazards, as well as build community consensus, set priorities, and improve public outreach and education.

OEJ administers grant opportunities each year to assist communities facing high vulnerabilities and exposures to environmental issues. Since **2006**, OEJ has awarded nearly **\$37 million** in funding for **300** projects to help support communities facing higher burdens of environmental issues. Grant opportunities through OEJ are supported by New York State's Environmental Protection Fund, with resources designated to environmental justice (EJ) communities.

Through three grant opportunities, OEJ awarded approximately \$15.7 million in 2025:

- Community Impact Grant Program (Round 11)
- Community Environmental Education Center (CEEC) Grant (Round 2)
- Air Pollution Mitigation Grant

In 2025, OEJ released two grant opportunities to be awarded in 2026—Community Impact Grants (Round 12) and Green Jobs for Youth—Skills Training Grant.

COMMUNITY IMPACT GRANT PROGRAM

A total of \$5.9 million was made available for community-based organizations for projects that address exposure of communities to multiple environmental harms and risks. Eligible projects must address a community's exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks and include a new research component that will be used to expand the knowledge of the affected community.

GREEN JOBS FOR YOUTH—SKILLS TRAINING GRANT

OEJ launched this second round of Green Jobs for Youth funding with a focus on skills training. To date, this funding has trained 373 youth in preparation for the green economy and placed 59 youth into jobs. There is \$4 million in funding available to nonprofits and Tribal Organizations to help youth in EJ communities develop skills training and promote job placement in various green industries. The application period began on September 25, 2025, and closed on January 28, 2026. DEC is in the process of reviewing applications and expects to announce awards by late summer.

To learn more about Environmental Justice Grant Programs, visit OEJ's grants page at <https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/environmental-justice/grant-programs>.

EJ LISTENING TOUR

During 2025, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) continued to plan EJ listening sessions that will be held in coming months in collaboration with local communities. Four were previously held in 2024 in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The goal of these listening sessions is to establish stronger relationships with communities and community leaders and promote more meaningful engagement between our agency and the New Yorkers we serve.



The attendees are attentively listening to the presentation.



DEC's Justin Starr, geologist, presenting to the attendees.

Nurturing strong ties between the agency and communities allows us to better understand and address environmental disparities and ensure DEC's programs and initiatives are effective in reaching EJ communities.

New York is continuing to prioritize EJ and address the historic economic, environmental, and public health burdens disproportionately faced by disadvantaged communities (DACs). The 2026 tour kicked off in Newburgh on January 21 with a focus on Newburgh's drinking water supply and DEC's continued response to per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination in the community. This event began with presentations from DEC and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), followed by an opportunity for the public to ask questions and voice concerns. The attendees were very engaged, opening up meaningful discussions among those present. At the end of the night, attendees were able to meet technical experts from DEC, DEP, New York State Department of Health, and other environmental groups during the resource fair.

More stops will be announced throughout 2026.

COMMISSIONER POLICY 79

On August 5, 2025, DEC issued a new commissioner's policy (CP) with the goal of decreasing DEC's operational impacts on DACs.

A CP is an internal set of guidelines that have department-level implications and govern the conduct and responsibilities within an organization or government body. The purpose of Policy 79 is to create uniform guidance that directs DEC's actions in reducing, and ultimately eliminating, the negative environmental impacts that DEC's operations may have on DACs.

OEJ will collaborate with the Office of Sustainability and the Division of Operations to ensure activities conducted at and by DEC facilities minimize or remove any potential negative environmental impacts on DACs.

To learn more about this policy and other policies, visit the CP page at <https://dec.ny.gov/regulatory/guidance-and-policy-documents/commissioners-policies>.



NYC DEP presentation about where Newburgh's water is coming from.



Attendees mingling with staff during the resource fair at the end of the night.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SITING LAW

DEC staff continued to take steps to implement the provisions of the EJ Siting Law, which requires lead agencies under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) to consider whether an action may cause or increase a disproportionate pollution burden on a DAC as part of the determination of significance for a proposed project. The public comment period on amendments to SEQR closed on May 7, 2025.

The law also requires DEC to incorporate EJ into the consideration of certain prescribed Uniform Procedures Act permits.

The EJ Siting Law went into effect on December 30, 2024.

RESOLUTION BINGO by Emily Thiel and Tiffany Yeung

It's the new year! Have you made your resolutions yet?

Resolutions are goals you set for yourself at the beginning of each year—typically focused on making positive changes and becoming better versions of ourselves. Sometimes changes can seem daunting as you try to make big meaningful resolutions that may end up making you feel restricted or like you've failed if you don't reach that goal by the end of the year.

Instead of placing all your efforts into one or two resolutions that you may forget halfway through the year, use the resolution bingo card! Why choose one resolution when you can fill up a bingo card with a variety of resolutions that best fit your 2026 journey.

The idea behind a resolution bingo card is simple, choose nine, 16, or 25 achievable and measurable resolutions. These can be a mix of your standard health, hobby, or family goals, but some can also focus on sustainability. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Take public transportation or carpool to work 20 times.
- Purchase a community-supported agriculture (CSA) share this summer.
- Visit the library once per month.
- Complete 35 Meatless Mondays.
- Contribute 10 volunteer hours to a humanitarian or environmental cause.
- Spend 50% of your gift budget at local businesses.

Once you've filled out your resolution bingo card, keep a physical copy in a place you'll see often (i.e., not in a desk drawer or saved on your computer). Then the fun begins. Instead of accomplishing or forgetting your one resolution, you can focus on the resolutions most appropriate to your future self. Wherever life ends up taking you in 2026, you'll have resilient goals to help keep you on track; keeping a tally of your progress will also make you feel accomplished and motivated all year long.

Don't forget that resolutions can be silly as well! Perhaps try a new cheese each month or eat as many pasta shapes as possible before the year ends.

See the Resolution Bingo card on the next page.



RESOLUTION BINGO

COMPLETE YOUR BINGO CARD WITH ACHIEVABLE
AND MEASURABLE RESOLUTIONS INCLUDING SOME
SUSTAINABLE HABITS, FOCUS ON WHAT BEST FITS YOUR
2026 JOURNEY AND STRIVE FOR BINGO!

		FREE		

SNAPSHOTS

Here are some events that OEJ staff participated in these past few months!

ECO JUSTICE BLOCK PARTY | BUFFALO

On October 16, a warm and sunny Saturday, DEC tabled alongside Erie County Environment & Planning at Open Buffalo's second annual Eco Justice Block Party. This year the event took place along Jefferson Avenue and offered free space for fun, learning, and community. DEC provided updates and engaged with the East Side about the Community Air Monitoring Initiative, as well as other EJ programs.



Kayla Baker engaging with community members beneath the Climate Action tent provided by Erie County.

NORTH COUNTRY CLIMATE-READY WORKFORCE ROUNDTABLE | QUEENSBURY



SUNY Adirondack Community leaders, students, educators, employers, and changemakers came together at Adirondack Climate Outreach and Resilience Network's North Country Climate-Ready Workforce Roundtable on Thursday, October 23, 2025, at SUNY Adirondack in Queensbury.

Attendees heard from a wide range of speakers from diverse sectors, such as BOCES and higher education, State agencies, and employers who discussed the workforce challenges, strengths, and visions for the region, as well as the need to create multidimensional workforce partnerships to train the next generation of climate and conservation leaders.

Dana McClure on the panel (right) sharing information about OEJ grants.

to speak about available funding through the Green Jobs for Youth grant opportunity that will support projects that help prepare the youth (ages 17–24) of New York to enter the workforce of emerging job opportunities in clean or green industries and provide tangible occupational skills sought by employers.

One of OEJ's grant administrators, Dana McClure, attended

DREAM SYMPOSIUM | ALBANY

OEJ joined members of DEC's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights (DICR) at the DREAM (Disability Rights and Employment Awareness Month) Symposium on October 28.

The Symposium acknowledges the rights that people with disabilities in New York are entitled to, celebrates the value that they bring to the workforce, and assists in matching prospective qualified candidates with employers. The highlights of the event included a vendor and technology fair, workshops, in-person job fair with over 50 inclusive employers, and a Special Olympics interactive athletic event.



DEC staff dividing and conquering outreach with two tables at the DREAM symposium to share information about employment and DEC in general.

KITE'S NEST GROUND BLESSING CEREMONY | HUDSON

By Kaya Weidman

OEJ Director Alanah Keddell-Tuckey, Grant Administrator Ray Lofffield, and Climate Policy Analyst Oliver Riley joined Kite's Nest for a ground blessing ceremony on November 1. Kite's Nest, a center for liberatory education serving youth in the city of Hudson and the Columbia County region, marked the beginning of construction on their ReGeneration Campus, a transformative two-acre ecological campus on the Hudson riverfront.

The project is supported by more than \$7.1 million in funding from New York State (in part by the CEEC grant) and will provide a permanent year-round home for Kite's Nest and create an anchor for youth-led learning, leadership, and community resilience in the region. Construction was scheduled to begin in December 2025, and the campus is expected to open in mid-2027.



Alanah speaking at the event as the Director of OEJ, which is partially funding the project through the CEEC grant.

The ground blessing ceremony brought together youth leaders, community members, partners, and supporters to celebrate this milestone. Close to 200 people gathered to share blessings, music, food, and speeches.

Unlike a traditional groundbreaking, Kite's Nest chose to call the event a "ground blessing"—to honor the land, the generations of young people who will grow and learn there, and the community that has made this vision possible. Leah Penniman, co-executive director of Soul Fire Farm, led the ceremony centering the youth leaders in honoring the land. Event attendees encircled the youth, placing a hand on their shoulders in a symbolic gesture of support as they offered their blessings to the soil upon which the new campus will be built. Event speakers included Alanah; Lindsay Turley, the Capital Project programs officer for the New York State Council on the Arts; Mark Gardner, lead architect of Jaklitsch/Gardner Architects; as well as members of Kite's Nest staff, board, and alumni.

The event closed with a sense of joy, commitment, and shared hope for the generations of young people who will thrive on the Kite's Nest ReGeneration Campus.



Jackson Porter Hardin

Members of OEJ attending the ground blessing ceremony. From right to left, Director Alanah Keddell-Tuckey, Climate Policy Analyst Oliver Riley, and Grants Administrator Raymond Lofffield.

CHECK PRESENTATION AND TOUR | BRONX

On December 17, Alanah joined DEC's Commissioner Amanda Lefton in the Bronx to present a \$2.5 million grant award to South Bronx Unite (SBU) for the Mott Haven HEArts community center, one of the awardees of OEJ's CEEC grant. This event amplified the announcement of \$12.6 million in grant funding for environmental education centers across the state and included a hard-hat tour inside the former Lincoln Recovery Center, which closed in 2011.



An inside look at the former Lincoln Recovery Center.



Commissioner Amanda Lefton presenting Mychal Johnson of SBU with a check for the CEEC grant award.

Afterward, the Commissioner and DEC staff joined Last-Mile Coalition on a walking tour along Barry Street in Hunts Point to discuss the air quality issues from delivery facilities and possible ways to improve air quality and reduce emissions.

MLK VOLUNTEER FAIR | ALBANY

DEC staff participated in the annual “Be a King” Volunteer Fair at the Empire State Plaza on Wednesday, January 14, 2026, to share information about the multitude of employment and volunteer opportunities with DEC. OEJ joined Environmental Education, Adventure NY, and DICR to share the open EJ grant opportunities.



Ashley Brammer and Tom Collins from Adventure NY joined to share outdoor recreation opportunities from across the state while Megan Ciotti from Environmental Education shared information about summer camp and summer seasonal employment.



Alanah (left) sharing information about funding opportunities offered by OEJ.



DEC with members of Last-Mile Coalition and ElectrifyNY.



Trimelle Andrews from DICR discussing employment information with an attendee.

APPLY FOR FUNDING

Are you a community-based organization looking to fund a project? OEJ offers grants to not-for-profit organizations to address environmental harms in low-income and EJ communities. For additional information on OEJ grants and a complete list of previous project awardees, please visit our website:

<https://dec.ny.gov/get-involved/environmental-justice/grant-programs>.

WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU

Do you have concerns about the environment where you live? Do you want to make your voice heard? Do you want to stay informed about the different environmental issues affecting New York State?



JOIN OUR EJ LISTSERV

Go to <https://dec.ny.gov/news/dec-delivers> and sign up to receive regular updates from OEJ. Stay current on the issues that are important to you. As always, you can contact OEJ with any concerns by sending an e-mail to: justice@dec.ny.gov.

Please include:

- Your location/address
- City, town, village, or borough
- The environmental concerns you wish to address
- List the potential source of pollution, if you know
- How or whether you wish to be contacted

Contact us:

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