

**VALLEY CLEAN ENERGY ALLIANCE  
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Staff Report - Item 9**

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**TO:** Valley Clean Energy Community Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Mitch Sears, Interim General Manager  
Rebecca Boyles, Director of Customer Care and Marketing

**SUBJECT:** Review and make recommendation to the Board to adopt the Draft Statement on Environmental Justice

**DATE:** September 24, 2020

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Review the incorporated feedback and changes in the Draft Statement on Environmental Justice; and
2. Recommend adoption of the Draft Statement to the VCE Board of Directors.

**BACKGROUND**

In June, the VCE Board of Directors appointed a Board Working Group to work with staff to develop a Draft Statement on Environmental Justice issues. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Board have provided direction that the draft statement should be focused on actions VCE can take to address these issues within the energy sector. The Draft Statement includes specific actions that VCE can take to help address these issues and strengthen the organization and communities served by VCE. Staff has asked the CAC for further feedback on how to make the Statement actionable and presented the Draft Statement and CAC feedback to the Board of Directors at the September 10<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

The CAC reviewed the Draft Statement and provided feedback at the August 27<sup>th</sup> CAC meeting. The feedback included adding “Racial” and “Climate” to “Environmental and Social Justice;” better identifying customers (including those that have opted out) in underrepresented communities and making sure VCE involves them more in workshops and CAC meetings; and expanding efforts by VCE and the Board to recruit for greater diversity on the CAC.

The intent to add “racial” and “climate” to “environmental and social justice” is to be more inclusive of historically marginalized groups, and to recognize that disadvantaged communities (DACs) often bear a disproportionate share of climate change impacts. VCE staff supports this intent; however, under closer inspection of the official definition of the term “environmental justice” by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), it appears that the intent is captured well in the official definition, and, in fact, the word “social” is rendered redundant in the term as well. The official definition of Environmental Justice (EJ) is: “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with

respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies<sup>1</sup>.” Staff recommends that we adhere to the EPA’s terminology and while maintaining inclusivity of the concepts of social, racial and climate justice by confirming the name “Environmental Justice Working Group.”

To address CAC feedback on better identifying and involving people from DACs in VCE’s workshops, programs and leadership, staff added more specificity to the Draft Statement on how VCE will engage a more diverse set of voices to participate in the VCE decision making process. Feedback on the intent to recruit for greater diversity on the CAC was expanded and added to the last action item on the Statement. The revised action item was changed to read:

“...more deeply integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion in our internal hiring, promotion, leadership (Board and CAC) and contracting policies.”

Staff has incorporated CAC feedback into the Draft Statement and requests that the CAC review the Draft Statement on Environmental Justice and make a recommendation to adopt the Statement to VCE’s Board of Directors at the October Board meeting.

### **Attachment**

1. Draft Statement on Environmental Justice issues

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>

**Attachment 1**  
**Draft of Valley Clean Energy's Statement on Environmental Justice**

Valley Clean Energy (VCE) is a mission-driven community-based not-for-profit public electricity supplier serving nearly 90% of the electricity customers in unincorporated Yolo County and the cities of Woodland, Davis, and Winters. We supply cost-competitive clean electricity to everyone who chooses our service, regardless of race, gender, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identification, nationality, religion or political views. We were established to achieve better outcomes for the customers and communities we serve and are therefore stronger and more effective when the full range of customer voices we serve are reflected in our decisions.

Valley Clean Energy recognizes that environmental justice issues are deeply ingrained in our society. This includes the energy sector, where VCE can have a role in directly addressing energy-related inequities many people in under-resourced or disadvantaged communities face. This time of broad awakening across our country challenges us to respectfully acknowledge our role in truly effecting better outcomes for all of the communities and customers we serve.

We acknowledge that historically not all customers have had equitable access to the decisions that shape and affect their communities. We will do our part to ensure that the decisions we make about energy supply and community reinvestment help to further environmental justice. Valley Clean Energy is committed to supplying more electricity that is produced by renewable, non-polluting sources such as solar, wind and hydroelectric. We are also committed to identifying and improving our systems that could perpetuate institutional barriers. To this end, VCE has made these commitments to further encourage diversity, equity and inclusion:

- We will listen, learn and act.
- We will explicitly integrate and address the concerns and priorities of historically marginalized communities in the design and implementation of VCE's services and programs – to ensure that *all* of our customers are well served.
- We will work alongside our sister agencies in the Environmental Justice and Equity Committee of the Community Choice Energy trade association (CalCCA) to develop programs and policies that reduce environmental harm in all California communities – especially those with a history of environmental injustice.
- We will invite a more diverse set of voices to the table to effectively advance environmental justice in low-income and disadvantaged communities (DACs). We will reach out to DACs through targeted outreach campaigns to more thoroughly involve them in VCE workshops, program design and meetings of the Board of Directors and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC).
- We will more deeply integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion in our internal hiring, promotion, leadership (Board and CAC) and contracting policies.

Confronting the current challenges of environmental justice requires authentic and sustained listening. To that end, we would like to extend the invitation to more deeply engage all members of our community – especially those whose voices have not yet have been fully represented. Please share your feedback, concerns and ideas at our [Board](#) and Community Advisory Committee meetings. All meetings are open to the public. And please consider contributing your expertise to VCE as a member of the Community Advisory Committee. Applications are available [here](#) -- and meeting schedules are available [here](#).