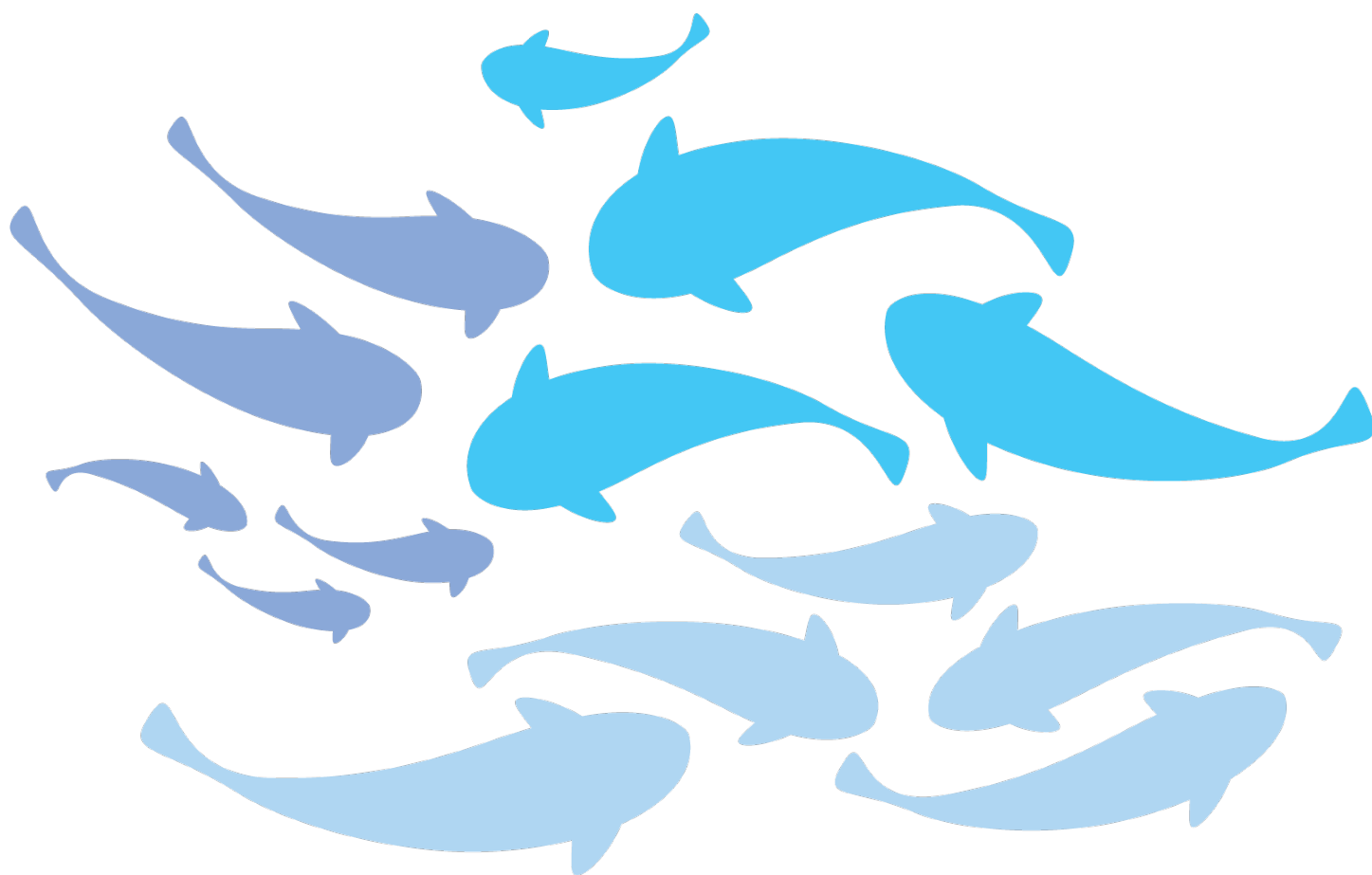




NOAA
FISHERIES

Agenda Item C.2
Attachment 1 (***Electronic Only***)
September 2024

West Coast
**Equity and Environmental
Justice Implementation Plan**



Executive Summary

NOAA Fisheries endeavors to equitably serve all communities in our stewardship of marine and anadromous fisheries, protected resources, habitats, and aquaculture. This West Coast Equity and Environmental Justice (EEJ) Implementation Plan uses guidance set forth in NOAA Fisheries' national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#) to incorporate and prioritize EEJ in our ongoing and future activities in the West Coast region.

NOAA Fisheries serves a wide diversity of communities throughout the West Coast. Generally speaking, these communities include everyone interested in or affected by federal fisheries and related regulations, research and monitoring, habitat restoration, or protected species conservation. Historically, partners and community members include, but are not limited to, tribal, state, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, fishermen and fishing organizations, the Pacific Fishery Management Council, community activists, academics studying fishery and habitat resources, teachers and students interested in these resources, federal agencies, permit holders or applicants, nature and wildlife enthusiasts, and the general public.

NOAA Fisheries' West Coast program offices include the West Coast Regional Office, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, Restoration Center, and Office of Law Enforcement. Collectively, these program offices (NOAA Fisheries West Coast) work to carry out our mission: stewardship of the nation's ocean resources and their habitat. We provide vital services for the nation, all backed by sound science and an ecosystem-based approach to management. We support commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing, protect marine life, and conserve and restore habitat.

West Coast Program Offices

- The **West Coast Regional Office** provides science-based conservation and management for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, marine mammals, sea turtles, and endangered species, and their habitats.
- The NOAA Fisheries **Northwest Fisheries Science Center** works with the West Coast Region to manage more than 90 commercially important fish species, recover over 30 threatened and endangered fish and marine mammal species, and identify and mitigate coastal and ocean health risks.
- The **Southwest Fisheries Science Center** conducts marine biological, ecological, and oceanographic research, observations, and monitoring of living marine resources and their environment. Center scientists work with numerous partners and our NOAA Fisheries counterparts—Northwest, Pacific Islands and Alaska fisheries science centers and the West Coast Regional Office—to provide sound science for national and international management decisions.
- NOAA Fisheries' **Restoration Center** has six field offices in this region working on recovery of ESA-listed (Endangered Species Act) species through habitat restoration.
- The **Office of Law Enforcement**'s mission is to protect marine wildlife and habitat by enforcing domestic laws and supporting international treaty requirements designed to ensure global resources are available for future generations.

Commitments and Challenges

NOAA Fisheries West Coast is committed to incorporating equity and environmental justice into everything we do, to the extent consistent with applicable law and availability of funding. We recognize that this commitment requires awareness, understanding, time, and adaptation, as we ask and learn about the needs of underserved and underrepresented communities. Due to both resource constraints and a desire to have an initial product upon which to gain community input, this initial implementation plan outlines the first steps that the above NOAA Fisheries program offices will undertake to identify, connect with, and engage underserved and/or under-resourced communities across the West Coast. We recognize that this will be a learning process, and a key feature of this plan is that it is intended to be a living document, to be updated and revised as we learn more about needs and opportunities related to EEJ in this region, and as those needs evolve over time. At a minimum, we will review and update this plan on an annual basis to reflect progress made, lessons learned, and revisions or additions to actions described throughout this plan.

NOAA Fisheries serves a wide diversity of communities throughout the West Coast. These communities include everyone interested in or affected by federal fisheries and related regulations, research and monitoring, habitat restoration, or protected species conservation. Historically, partners and community members include, but are not limited to, tribal, state, and local governments, non-governmental organizations, fishermen and fishing organizations, the Pacific Fishery Management Council, community activists, academics studying fishery and habitat resources, teachers and students interested in these resources, federal agencies, permit holders or applicants, nature and wildlife enthusiasts, and the general public.

While we have engaged with many of these partners and community members in a variety of ways over the course of many years, we recognize that some may have been unidentified. The NOAA Fisheries EEJ Strategy aims to fill in those gaps and ensure that we serve communities that are affected by our mission equally. We also recognize that, even when services are provided, resources available to a community may not be sufficient to enable its members to benefit as intended.

Barriers that some communities may face in accessing or benefitting from NOAA Fisheries' services include language barriers, lack of access to provided resources such as information or funding, unavailability of information, geographic isolation, and general mistrust of federal/government entities.

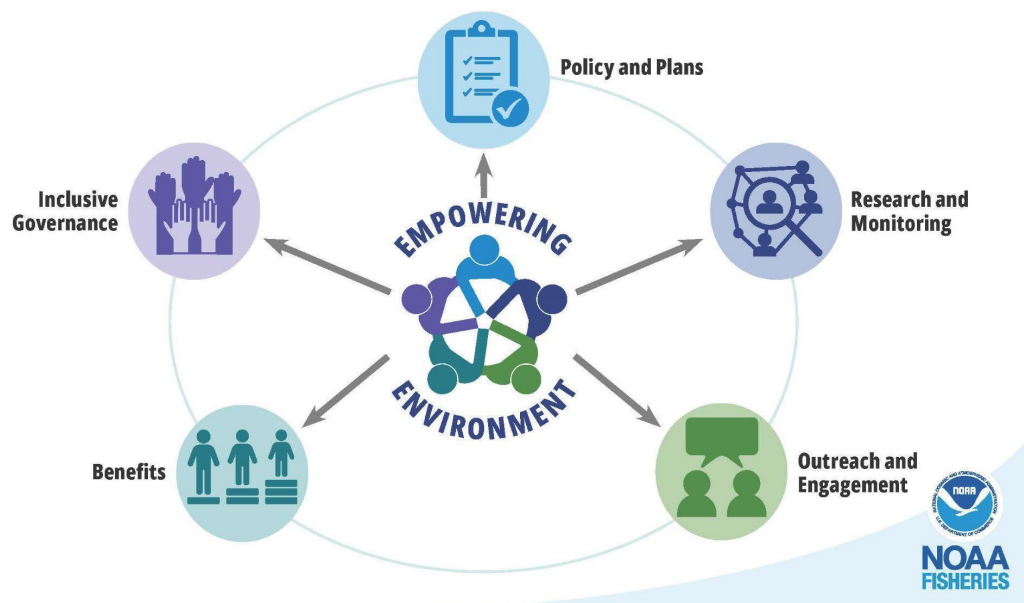
The intended audience for this plan is anyone interested in understanding how we will begin to incorporate EEJ into our actions. We are beginning initial engagement efforts having identified the following as communities that have potentially been underserved in the West Coast region. It is important to note that this list is only a starting point, and we will revise it as we learn more from members of these communities and other partners.

- Tribal communities: During the comment phase for the NOAA Fisheries EEJ Strategy, we heard that some tribal communities were in favor of being included, as future EEJ efforts from our agency may benefit them. Others do not wish to be categorized as underserved communities under the umbrella of the strategy. Therefore, we know we need to proceed with engagement on a case-by-case basis and slowly build our understanding of the needs and wishes of these communities as it pertains to EEJ.
- Minority fishing communities: Southeast Asian, African American, Latin American, AANHPI (Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander), including commercial, non-commercial, recreational, or subsistence fishing.

NOAA Fisheries West Coast EEJ Actions

NOAA Fisheries West Coast has developed this initial regional implementation plan to describe how we intend to put NOAA Fisheries' national [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#) into action here on the West Coast. We have identified priority actions in our geographic region, the intended EEJ impact, and how their success will be measured (metrics). These are described in the following sections organized by the six objectives in the national EEJ Strategy. In some cases, these actions have long been an integral part of our work, and in others they represent a new or updated approach. The sections below include actions that we can do now, with existing resources, as well as some that represent steps requiring additional resources that we would like to take in the future.

A key feature of this plan is an expectation that it is a living resource, to be updated and revised as we learn more about needs and opportunities related to EEJ in this region, and as those needs and our capacity to address them evolve over time. Among the first steps is identifying underserved communities impacted by NOAA Fisheries West Coast activities, in order to improve our awareness of these communities and their needs related to EEJ, and to seek input from those communities on this first version of the plan.



The Six Core Areas of NOAA Fisheries' EEJ Strategy

1. Empowering environment
2. Policy and planning
3. Research and monitoring
4. Outreach and engagement
5. Benefits
6. Inclusive governance

**Objective 1:
Empowering
Environment**

Provide the institutional support, including training and resources, needed to implement multiple EEJ approaches at NOAA Fisheries. Internal leadership and management will identify EEJ as priorities and encourage staff to consider EEJ in every aspect of their work.

The work of NOAA Fisheries on the West Coast is ultimately in service to the American people, including those in sectors and communities directly and indirectly affected by our laws, regulations, programs, and policies. Achieving the mission of the agency and the objectives of the Executive Orders on EEJ and the NOAA Fisheries national EEJ strategy starts with the leadership, support, and resources we provide to all of our staff. NOAA Fisheries West Coast has supported an empowering environment by first engaging all staff in learning, discussions, and activities on the topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. This deeper understanding provides the basis for more informed and open staff engaging in their daily work within and external to our agency. Specific to our EEJ efforts, a team of staff representing NOAA Fisheries' programs on the West Coast have developed the initial phases of this implementation plan, and we have applied for (and been awarded) funds to bring additional contract support to our working group and to support future internal and external community engagement.

To strengthen an empowering environment for EEJ work across the West Coast, we will first focus on building our internal capacity and resources for all staff. Key to our future success is that all staff are engaged in EEJ actions as a native part of their particular work. Subsequent regional implementation plans will refine and add to these initial efforts, but some foundational capacity is needed first. In the tables below, we describe the actions we expect to take as we build our capacity and resources to engage with our communities and incorporate EEJ into our daily work. These break down into several theme areas:

- Prioritizing EEJ in our planning, staffing, and performance accountability efforts
- Developing or accessing key learning resources for all staff
- Internal staff engagement
- Supporting opportunities for staff engagement with external communities and partners
- Development or refinement of tools important to incorporating EEJ into all of our work

A. Prioritizing EEJ in our planning, staffing, and performance accountability efforts

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Explicitly include and prioritize EEJ considerations and activities in planning and budgeting processes	EEJ embedded from the beginning	<p>Number of actions implemented from the implementation plan</p> <p>Number of staff hired or percentage of staff time dedicated to gathering and inclusion of community input into decisions</p> <p>Development and refinement of tools and rubrics to support EEJ within our work</p>
2. Develop and include standard EEJ language for inclusion in performance plans	Communicates clearly an expectation that EEJ considerations are to be incorporated where appropriate in all of our work	<p>Development and inclusion of the language in all plans</p> <p>All plans have the standard language included</p>
3. Leadership supports West Coast representation on the National EEJ WG	Regional and national EEJ efforts linked	Consistent representation of one or more West Coast staff on National EEJ WG
4. Continue to support a West Coast cross-office team to develop and refine regional implementation plans based on experience gained across the West Coast	<p>Maintains commitment and cross-office coordination for EEJ implementation and accountability</p> <p>Provides a central resource for questions or issues that arise across the West Coast</p>	<p>A standing team exists, with a charter and some identified staffing and resources to implement, update, and refine regional implementation plans</p> <p>Each office has at least one identified EEJ Coordinator</p>
5. Coordinate and maintain annual reports on EEJ implementation progress on metrics	Supports accountability and linking regional and national EEJ efforts	Number of completed actions or completion rates on individual metrics met
6. As budgets and staffing approvals allow, continue to explore the use of internships, direct hiring authority, and other special hiring authorities to increase access to available vacancies to underserved, under-represented, or under-resourced communities	Supports job opportunities for underserved, under-represented, or under-resourced communities	Increase in percentage of staff with positions and skills that support EEJ implementation

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
7. Develop an understanding of key skills and abilities to include in position descriptions, resume reviews, and interview questions to support a future workforce with the skills needed to effectively engage with underserved, under-represented, or under-resourced communities.	Improves the hiring process to facilitate workforce development suited to supporting EEJ efforts	Percentage of hires that reflect these desired skills and abilities
8. Develop standard language for contract performance work statements and requests for proposals that includes and recognizes the need for EEJ considerations in the work done by contractors that work with external partners and communities	Communicates clearly an expectation that EEJ considerations are to be incorporated where appropriate in all of our work	Development and inclusion of the language in all solicitations and proposals and resulting contract requirements

B. Developing or accessing key learning resources for all staff

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Identify available training resources and develop a plan to increase staff capacity for EEJ through focused learning opportunities and/or workshops. Resources may include topics such as understanding and mitigating bias, cultural competencies, outreach and engagement skills, and problem-solving	Develops the foundational skills and expectations for all staff to incorporate EEJ into all West Coast work where appropriate	An initial training plan and resources are developed Number of trainings provided each year Percentage of West Coast staff that have taken one or more training
2. Provide periodic updates via leadership messages, all-hands meetings, and other opportune fora to share EEJ projects and progress across the West Coast	Keeps EEJ topics “in the news” and helps provide examples and points of contact for staff working on their own EEJ efforts	One region-wide meeting with EEJ updates on the agenda At least one division-specific all-hands meeting or email (per division) with EEJ topics on the agenda
3. Budget for and provide EEJ training opportunities for all staff	Demonstrates leadership commitment to EEJ efforts 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 surveys of staff

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
4. Determine and provide resources to assist staff to understand how they can incorporate EEJ into their work and describe what it looks like. Develop tools, templates, ideas, and examples as guides for staff	Increased participation in EEJ inclusion in staff efforts Increased understanding of EEJ efforts and benefits	Number of successful EEJ efforts by staff Number of consistent EEJ efforts by staff over time

C. Internal staff engagement

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Conduct internal “community engagement” sessions to learn directly from staff at all levels about their understanding, attitudes, and ideas around EEJ efforts (see also Action 1.B.3)	Directly involves staff and creates understanding and buy-in on EEJ efforts Improves future/ongoing iterations of the regional implementation plan	Three listening session opportunities provided in each office/center (fewer or more as dictated by size) Session notes summarized and key points and data included in future regional implementation plans
2. As part of annual feedback cycles or informal supervisor-staff check-ins, include specific opportunities or questions to discuss EEJ work	Maintains awareness at all levels of the importance of EEJ in our effective governance	At least one discussion held per year per staff person
3. Maintain a West Coast EEJ Working Group representative on the WCR DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility) Team (which includes members from other area offices)	Continues connections between the EEJ Working Group and the DEIA Team	EEJ Working Group seat on the team roster is maintained and occupied

D. Supporting opportunities for staff engagement with external communities and partners

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Leadership prioritizes funding to support staff and leadership travel to community engagement events. Leverages existing travel requirements where possible to include opportunities for community engagement in local areas	Provides opportunities for direct, in-person engagement with communities	Percentage of staff afforded stand-alone or leveraged opportunities to conduct direct community engagement
2. Leadership prioritizes funding to provide travel support to invited community members to engagement opportunities	Increases opportunities to meet with and learn from community members who might otherwise be unable to travel	Number of community members with travel support
3. 3. Conduct an annual strategic EEJ Working Group and Communications Teams meeting to develop outreach and engagement plans, messages, and materials	Supports development of focused EEJ engagements designed to build upon prior successes and lessons learned	Meeting has been held once per year

E. Development or refinement of tools important to incorporating EEJ into all of our work

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Via meetings, discussion seminars, or online collaboration resources, 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 underserved communities	Increases internal coordination so as to reduce community burden and confusion of projects working in silos or at cross purposes, and to increase communication regarding EEJ issues	Number of staff (or projects) that are able to access existing resources or connections due to shared knowledge on preceding community engagements
2. Identify and develop organization-wide resources to support community engagement activities. Examples may include tools to identify affected communities, guides or templates to build EEJ considerations into daily work, engagement materials, or scripts to ease community engagements and encourage community feedback	Provides needed support and resources to ease staff workload and reduce or eliminate barriers to effective community engagement and inclusion of EEJ in our work	Number of resources created Number of staff that consult and/or have found each resource useful

Objective 2: Policy and Planning

Ensure NOAA Fisheries West Coast policies promote equal opportunities for all and do not create unintended inequities or unequal burdens for underserved communities.

NOAA Fisheries West Coast has already incorporated EEJ into some of our policy and plans. For example, we consider EEJ during our National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) scoping and analyze EEJ in our NEPA documents when pertinent.

To further build EEJ into our policies and plans, NOAA Fisheries West Coast will undertake a more systematic approach. We will conduct a review of West Coast policies and internal guidance. We will first identify which of our policies may have an EEJ impact. Then we will determine whether revisions may be necessary to advance EEJ objectives. Where appropriate, we will also explore opportunities to incorporate Indigenous knowledge (IK) and establish language, templates, and guidance for inclusion in future actions that reflect EEJ objectives into our policies. Focal policy areas for NOAA Fisheries West Coast may include:

- Joint Enforcement Agreements
- NEPA policy
- Strategic planning
- Outreach policy
- Workplace and administration guidance (workforce recruitment/hiring, internships, grants)

We will conduct further outreach to (1) identify underserved communities impacted by NOAA Fisheries West Coast policy and planning activities and (2) work with them to identify where our policies need to better consider their needs. This will increase our awareness of underserved communities and allow for better communication on policies and decisions.

We will engage the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) and its ad-hoc EEJ Committee in evaluating how management of West Coast fisheries and protection of Essential Fish Habitat have affected identified communities. The goal will be to identify and address barriers and structures that may lead to the systemic exclusion of underserved communities in the Council process. We will support engaging the PFMC in the anticipated process of updating the guidelines for National Standard 8 related to “fishing communities.” We may also assist the Council in developing strategic partnerships to further pursue EEJ-related goals and objectives.

We will also consider how our West Coast policies and approaches to our work under the Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act, especially for those actions we propose or undertake, have impacted underserved or under-resourced communities.

Finally, we will begin to identify and develop programs, policies, and activities to address, within the scope of our authority and impact, the disproportionately high and adverse effects of climate change and other cumulative environmental impacts on underserved communities on the West Coast. These effects may include potential impacts on food security, as well as other economic, social, and cultural impacts. Our [Western Regional Action Plan](#) identifies priority actions to implement the [NOAA Fisheries Climate Science Strategy](#) and to advance ecosystem-based and climate-informed decision-making, resilience, and adaptation in the region.

A. Evaluation of internal and external policies and identify opportunities for better EEJ incorporation

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Conduct a review of West Coast policies and internal guidance	Determine whether revisions may be necessary to advance EEJ objectives. Incorporate Indigenous knowledge where appropriate	Timelines and standards established for reviews and addressing EEJ in those processes Number of reviews completed Number of processes updated based on reviews and measured against pre-established timelines and standards
2. Coordinate with the PFMC to evaluate how West Coast fisheries management and protection of Essential Fish Habitats have impacted identified communities. Develop strategic partnerships with the PFMC to further pursue EEJ-related goals and objectives	Understand the historic EEJ context of fisheries policy, and improve our ability to advance EEJ objectives through partnership	PFMC policies and protocols are reviewed and updated as appropriate PFMC is engaged in National Standard 8 updates Number of strategic partnerships developed
3. Begin to identify and develop programs, policies, and activities to address climate change and other cumulative environmental impacts on West Coast underserved communities	Begin to address the disproportionately high and adverse effects of climate change and other cumulative environmental impacts on West Coast underserved communities	Number of programs, policies, and activities that address climate change impacts on underserved communities
4. Establish language, templates, and guidance for policy documents created by NOAA Fisheries West Coast program offices that reflect EEJ objectives	Improve EEJ in policy documents where appropriate and accurate Improve standardized EEJ language and goals	Increased awareness and inclusion of EEJ goals Number of policy documents with EEJ language

Objective 3: Research and Monitoring

Identify underserved communities and their needs, conduct collaborative research, and assess impacts of management decisions.

To embed EEJ into our research and monitoring, NOAA Fisheries West Coast will identify existing relationships to expand our understanding of underserved communities and build bridges to those communities. Additionally, we will develop and support paid internships to provide opportunities to underserved students.

A. Identify, establish, and build relationships to begin the process of incorporation of EEJ in research.

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Identify existing relationships to expand our understanding of underserved communities. (e.g., fisheries observers, Sea Grant personnel, Council staff, United States Coast Guard, state agency staff, industry groups, Fishermen's Wives groups, etc.) Build bridges to those communities	Clear paths of communication improve next steps to determine unique EEJ needs Improve access to federal personnel and resources	Number of contacts in different underserved communities Number of efforts identified
2. Within available funding, develop and support paid internships to provide opportunities to underserved students. Communicate existing opportunities to underserved communities. See also Action 1.A.6	To develop the next generation of NOAA Fisheries staff To ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce into the future	Number of students participating in the program Number of staff involved in the program
3. Develop templates, tools, and guidance for researchers to include EEJ-specific language into grants, research proposals, and cooperative agreements	Standardize EEJ protocols in recruitments. Broaden communication of research opportunities and inclusion of underserved community members Remove barriers to accessing this type of information	Templates developed Tools Developed Standardized language in funding proposals
4. Provide webinars, workshops, and training to clearly communicate our goals to achieve improved connections with underserved communities. Assess research opportunities from these connections	Clear communication with community members Identify where efforts need to be focused and will have the most impact	Number of potential research opportunities Number of identified underserved communities Clarification of communities that should be excluded

B. Create, identify, and use tools to co-develop, co-design, and distribute research findings to communities.

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Develop tools for NOAA researchers to connect to underserved communities, either at universities and colleges, in communities, or otherwise, to participate in NOAA research cruises or as part of NOAA research activities	Relationship building and experiences can lead to job and training opportunities for underserved community members Experience from underserved community members can improve fisheries science (e.g., local knowledge)	Number of tools developed Number of university agreements Increased broad participation
2. Determine cooperative or citizen science projects, provide training, and establish systems to collect data related to climate, fisheries, aquaculture, wind, or other new research for use in fisheries management	Citizen-driven science including underserved communities serves to educate communities, involve them in the science process, establish paths to new data sources, create STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) opportunities, improve fisheries management, and improve EEJ objectives	Number of projects with underserved communities Number of products generated from/with community members New methods of communication/posting information
3. Identify best means of communication in underserved communities, and establish communication lines for fisheries information (e.g., restore bulletins, distribute monthly electronic bulletins, etc.)	Improved communication Means to communicate research findings to specific communities Removal of barriers/access to fisheries information	New lines of communication established
4. Establish new relationships with organizations and individuals who represent or work with underserved communities to engage with those communities. Establish pathways of communication, research opportunities, mentoring, and training opportunities, and scientific collaborations	Establish new bridges to underserved communities Work toward lowering barriers to access of fisheries resources	New collaborations New research projects

C. Collaborate with social scientists to improve tools and their use in pertinent analyses, and broaden our understanding of underserved communities and the benefits of fisheries management to communities.

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Develop templates and examples of how to improve social science, EEJ, and DEIA language in impact assessments, stock assessments, SAFE (Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation) reports, Ecosystem Plans, and other management plans	Improved understanding of impacts of management actions on underserved communities Better reflection of all communities in management documents	Number of EEJ sections in management documents/products Number of management documents that incorporate the non-economic social sciences
2. Work with social scientists, on a national basis and others, to develop a method to define and identify underserved communities	Increase awareness of underserved communities Improve targeted efforts to design and apply EEJ research efforts	Tools for identifying underserved communities Better knowledge identified through reports, websites, relationships, and other products
3. Engage with local fishing and coastal community members to better understand climate impacts, stock structure, ocean changes, and other fisheries indicators. Determine how to include local and Indigenous knowledge into biological science reports	Community members see their information reflected in management decisions More diverse decisions based on more diverse information Level access to management decisions	Number of reports including local knowledge Number of management efforts containing participation by local community members

Objective 4: Outreach and Engagement

Build relationships with underserved communities to better understand their engagement preferences and improve information sharing with all communities.

NOAA Fisheries West Coast programs will incorporate EEJ into our outreach and engagement work by actively seeking and building long-term relationships with underserved communities to better understand their engagement and information sharing preferences. Our outreach and engagement efforts will include the following priorities:

- Identifying underserved communities affected by NOAA Fisheries' actions, policies, and regulations on the West Coast
- Identifying pathways of engagement with Indigenous and immigrant communities
- Improving communication, knowledge sharing, and engagement with communities and partners, and consider what the benefits of engagement are to the target communities
- Hosting in-person culturally appropriate meetings to have inclusive conversations with West Coast communities
- Providing information in accessible language, including plain language (508 compliant), and translation and interpretation (services and translated materials)

- Supporting easily accessible and inclusive sources of information (e.g., websites, radio stations, social media)
- Providing education, training, and internship opportunities for students from underserved communities
- Providing training on navigating the federal application processes

Below, actions to address our outreach and engagement objectives and priorities are described, grouped in tables aligned with the following approaches: A) Develop best practices for communication and engagement, B) Apply best practices where underserved communities are located, and C) Improve access to education and training programs.

A. Develop best practices for communication and engagement

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Uphold commitment to be responsive to correspondence and requests from the community	Improve federal follow-through with the community as requested	Reported increase of responsiveness by NOAA Fisheries from community
2. Lead outreach and engagement from the region to preserve and protect community relationships	Build and enhance relationships and trust	Percentage of outreach and engagement efforts by national offices that are coordinated through the regional offices
3. Identify culturally appropriate language access needs	Best practice resources developed to enhance EEJ implementation	Best practices created for language access

B. Apply best practices for communication and engagement

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Increase in-person engagements with underserved communities where they are located Utilize venues within the underserved communities for meetings and workshops	Underserved communities have better access to and awareness of agency activities that affect them Fulfillment of goal to meet constituents where they are	Number of NOAA in-person engagement opportunities with underserved communities Number of participants at NOAA-supported engagements Record of meetings taking place in underserved communities
2. Maintain and enhance virtual and hybrid opportunities to engage with NOAA Fisheries West Coast, including meetings and workshops	Barriers to engagement on science and management are reduced; accessibility of meetings and workshops is improved Improve meetings with more diversity and knowledge	Virtual and hybrid meeting/workshop opportunities are continued/increased

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
3. Create informal engagement opportunities for scientists and managers to build trust directly with underserved communities over time. Focus on building lines of communication with groups that have not historically been included in research	Relationship building with underserved communities including regulated and/or underserved communities	Reported improved relationship between scientists, managers, and communities
4. Provide plain language and translation and interpretation of materials and presentations where needed and appropriate Summarize important management decisions in different languages and disseminate on multiple platforms to reach underserved communities	Underserved communities have better access to, and awareness of, science and management decisions and processes that affect them	Culturally and linguistically appropriate services provided to West Coast communities Number of new efforts to disseminate information in non-English languages Number of standard locations where information is disseminated
5. Continue support of the Marine Resources and Education Program (MREP) and explore other ways to provide underserved communities the information and tools needed to engage in fishery management decision processes	Increase ability of underserved community members to confidently, productively, and effectively participate in governance processes and represent their community's needs	Number of underserved community members participating in the annual MREP West fisheries science and management workshops Development or engagement in other opportunities to provide underserved communities with relevant information/skills

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

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Provide training or increased informational resources for communities on how to navigate federal grant application systems	<p>Increase access to federal applications systems to underserved communities</p> <p>Increase in technical support and grant-writing seminars provided to underserved persons in underserved communities</p>	<p>Number of people trained from underserved communities</p> <p>Number of public outreach events advertising this service</p> <p>Number of underserved communities receiving access to technical expertise and subject matter experts</p>
2. Establish a targeted recruitment plan for underrepresented students, including expanding existing internship and fellowship program opportunities, and find ways to promote NOAA as a career opportunity	<p>Removal of barriers for underserved community members to apply and participate in internship and fellowship programs</p> <p>Encourages aspiring youth and early-career professionals from underserved communities to become the next generation of marine resource stewards and conservationists</p>	<p>Increased representation of underserved communities in internships and fellowship programs</p> <p>Number of new recruitment strategies deployed for underrepresented students</p> <p>Increase in the number of students from underserved communities participating in internships and projects</p>
3. Actively maintain a list of shovel-ready projects for potential future interns	Improves transparency and visibility of training opportunities available to members of underserved communities	Increase in number of students from underserved communities participating in internships and projects
4. Partner with non-NOAA groups who have experience working with, and have access to, underserved communities to build bridges, participate in teaching STEM to new generations of underserved students, and create programs to work with these communities (for example, the Ocean Discovery Institute)	<p>Improve EEJ connections</p> <p>Improve communication with underserved communities</p> <p>Increase exposure of underserved youth to STEM and science.</p>	<p>Number of students exposed to NOAA science</p> <p>Number of new connections</p>

Objective 5: Equitably Distribute Benefits

Distribute benefits equitably by increasing the access to opportunities for underserved communities.

NOAA Fisheries seeks to examine its policies, criteria, and processes related to the provision of funding and other benefits to ensure equitable distribution. The key challenges will be to recognize and repair inequities and to identify new opportunities to deliver benefits to underserved communities. To embed EEJ into how we distribute benefits, the West Coast will improve access and remove barriers to federal government resources by:

A. Improving access and removing barriers to federal government resources

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Where allowable, include input from underserved communities into funds distribution decision-making. Consider and develop materials to describe the decision-making process and associated rubrics or criteria for community awareness	Increase equity in distribution of benefits	More equitable distribution of resource allocation
2. Support tribal, state, and community capacity for protected resources conservation where possible by providing technical assistance and/or grants or other appropriated funding award mechanisms	Consider EEJ objectives in distribution of resources supporting the protection of species that may have cultural and subsistence value for tribes, Indigenous, and underserved communities	EEJ objectives are integrated into decisions on funding or other support provided to tribes and states for protected species conservation, where allowable and appropriate
3. Establish a system to track and report on the percentage of grants, funding opportunities, experimental fishing permits, and other benefits and opportunities offered to determine how many have been allocated to underserved communities	Understand and reduce barriers to access by underserved communities to grants, funding, and other benefits and opportunities that NOAA Fisheries West Coast provides	Identify levels of participation Determine programs to increase participation over time
4. Incorporate EEJ considerations into resource (staff and funds) allocation decision-making to improve equitable distribution, to the extent consistent with applicable law	Increase equity in distribution of benefits	More equitable distribution of resource allocation
5. Coordinate with the Restoration Center on agreements with tribal and underserved communities funded by the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This includes coordination on any permitting, ESA, EFH (Essential Fish Habitat), or NEPA compliance	Increase equity in distribution of benefits	Contacts and coordination approaches established

Objective 6: Inclusive Governance

Enable the meaningful involvement of underserved communities in decision-making processes.

NOAA Fisheries West Coast programs recognize the need for meaningful involvement of underserved communities in decision-making and the value they bring to such processes. Meaningful involvement requires access to information, equitable opportunities to participate, and representation on relevant advisory or other groups. We are incorporating EEJ into the governance process by raising internal awareness of EEJ issues within our own programs and employees, connecting with partners such as the Pacific Fishery Management Council who are engaged in similar efforts, and working to ensure that materials and meetings are accessible to all in language and format.

We will continue and expand these efforts, and identify new areas in which we can make progress toward more inclusive governance, through developing and expanding partnerships, identifying underserved West Coast communities and their needs, and seeking resources to support additional translations, participation in meetings by underserved community members, and other EEJ-related activities. We recognize that these efforts will be ongoing and will evolve and expand as we learn from underserved communities and partners.

A. Improve opportunities for inclusive governance in public processes

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
1. Identify underserved communities affected by decisions of NOAA Fisheries West Coast programs	Understand who and where the communities are, connect with key community members, and understand the needs of these communities	Identification of underserved communities
2. Encourage and support increased representation of underserved communities on the Pacific Fishery Management Council and its advisory bodies. Work with the Council to identify and address barriers and structures that may lead to the systemic exclusion of underserved communities in the Council process	Increase understanding and direct representation of underserved community needs in the PFMC process, and increase direct participation in PFMC decisions	Representation by underserved community members on PFMC or its advisory bodies Barriers identified and addressed
3. Ensure that public meetings are inclusive, safe, and welcoming	Choose location, venue, and meeting format accessible to underserved communities. Establish and enforce expectations of behavior at meetings. Provide avenues for input that are comfortable for all participants, including multiple avenues where appropriate.	Feedback from underserved community members on inclusivity, and impression of safety and welcome in public meetings

Action	EEJ Impact	Metrics
4. Establish or improve relationships with state and local governments, other federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other groups to leverage their community connections when soliciting public input	Expand our ability to reach underserved communities through partners' connections	Coordination with partners to share community connections Ability to reach more underserved communities and/or key members of those communities
5. Continue to honor tribal sovereignty and the federal trust responsibility. Strengthen relationships with tribes, especially in regards to climate change impacts and fisheries	Uphold commitments to tribes and consider any related EEJ concerns or impacts	Relationships with tribes
6. Continue to engage in fisheries and resource co-management with state agencies and tribal nations and coordinate on issues that involve underserved communities	Incorporate EEJ and consider the needs of underserved communities in co-management	Co-management relationships and processes

Future Steps

NOAA Fisheries West Coast will work to identify, connect with, and engage underserved and/or under-resourced communities across the West Coast. The first step will be to share this initial West Coast EEJ Implementation Plan widely. We will work with existing partners to identify underserved communities and appropriate times, places, and methods to engage with them directly on this plan. In addition, we will present this plan at a meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council, and consider input received through that channel from the Council, its advisors, and the public. We will also use this plan to engage across all of our Fisheries' staff on the West Coast to gain their perspectives and input on further ways we can build EEJ considerations and actions into our work. We will then incorporate feedback and adjust action items accordingly. Throughout this process, we will also work to implement the outlined objectives and the above EEJ actions.