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The Environmental Justice Scorecard has been updated. Phase Two of the Environmental Justice Scorecard was released on July 24, 2024.

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[Scorecard](#)




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Department of Agriculture

29 office(s), 4,500+ location(s), 92,106 employees, and 20,630 new hire(s) in Fiscal Year 2023


The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA or the Department) provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related topics based on public policy, the best available science, and effective management.

USDA impacts almost every American every day. USDA agencies and offices provide support and leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural

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development, nutrition, and related topics based on sound public policy, best available science, and efficient management. USDA is committed to: supporting inclusive, sustainable economies; mitigating legacy pollution; protecting communities from environmental hazards; promoting climate-smart practices in agriculture, forestry, and energy production; implementing consistent, meaningful public engagement; and addressing barriers to access of federal resources, services, and programs.

[technical assistance](#) 

Some examples of well-known USDA offices, bureaus, or agencies are:

- Farm Service Agency
- Forest Service
- Rural Development

Progress on Advancing Environmental Justice

This section demonstrates key progress on advancing environmental justice at the Department of Agriculture in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

Key Highlights ([show less](#) ^)



Urban Agriculture

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service established 17 new urban agricultural service centers in major U.S. cities to administer farm loan, conservation, risk management, and disaster assistance programs. FSA awarded \$40 million in agreements to partner organizations to raise awareness of USDA programs and help urban producers enroll. FSA implemented 10 new Urban County Committees to help administer FSA programs in urban areas.

[Learn more](#) 

Urban and Community Forestry Grants

Photo credit:
DJ Sene

In FY 2023, USDA's Forest Service awarded more than \$1 billion through the Urban and Community Forestry Program, funding nearly 400 projects to expand access to trees and green spaces in urban communities and neighborhoods. The funding was

NextGen Program

USDA announced \$262.5 million for the “From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals” (NextGen) program to foster agricultural career development opportunities for scholars at Minority-Serving Institutions. The 33 funded NextGen projects at over 60 institutions will support training for over 20,000 participants.

[Learn more](#) 

awarded and announced for entities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, two U.S. territories, three Freely Associated States in the Pacific, and multiple Tribes. 100% of the benefits from these investments will flow to disadvantaged communities, as identified by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool.

[Learn more](#) 

Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Outreach

Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services conducted numerous listening sessions, workshops, and training sessions to provide technical assistance to Tribes and Minority Serving Institutions. Engagements focused on: sharing information about wildlife disease and damage management, pest survey training, accessing USDA programs and services, building partnerships and collaboration with USDA, and in-person agency recruitment.

Learn more 

Rural Development's Creating Opportunities through Rural Engagement Program

Through the Creating Opportunities through Rural Engagement (CORE) Program, Rural Development conducts targeted engagements with underserved rural and Tribal communities that have not received funding from field-based Agency programs in the last five years. Agency staff work with local governments and organizations to identify and address barriers to program access.

[Learn more](#) 

Equity in Conservation Outreach Agreements

In FY 2023, the Natural Resources Conservation Service invested \$70 million in partnerships that expand outreach to underserved producers and disadvantaged communities, and provide opportunities for students to pursue careers in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences through Equity in Conservation Outreach Agreements.

[Learn more](#) 

Justice40 Initiative

This section demonstrates progress on the implementation of the Justice40 Initiative at the Department of Agriculture in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.


Overview

To promote USDA's progress in enhancing how benefits from Justice40 covered programs flow to disadvantaged

What is the Justice40 Initiative?

The Justice40 Initiative set the goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of

communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution, agencies developed internal Implementation Plans for each covered program. These plans outline the modifications agencies are and will implement to enhance how program benefits flow to disadvantaged communities. Modifications include, for example, publishing information about programs in multiple languages and including benefits to disadvantaged communities as evaluation criteria for funding proposals.

For more information on USDA's Justice40 covered programs, please contact Justice40_USDA@usda.gov 

certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution.

[Learn more](#) 

Justice40 Covered Programs

([show less](#) ^)

The Department of Agriculture has:

- **70** Justice40 covered program(s), including **29** Justice40 covered program(s) that is/are funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Inflation Reduction Act, or both

Progress on the Justice40 Initiative

Through President Biden's [Investing](#)

[in America](#) agenda and other sources, **USDA** has:

approximately

\$91 billion

in funds available to obligate (i.e., to spend) in Fiscal Years (FY) 2022 - 2027 through its Justice40 covered programs.¹

Through President Biden's [Justice40 Initiative](#), **USDA** is working to deliver benefits to disadvantaged communities. Each program that is part of the Justice40 Initiative delivers benefits in at least one of [seven investment categories](#), and many programs are delivering benefits to communities across multiple categories of investment. The **70** covered program(s) at **USDA** working to deliver benefits for communities include:

- **48** program(s) protecting communities from the impacts of climate change
- **17** program(s) advancing clean and affordable energy for communities
- **1** program(s) delivering and advancing clean transportation options for communities

- **6** program(s) advancing affordable and sustainable housing
- **7** program(s) delivering training and workforce development benefits
- **9** program(s) addressing the remediation and reduction of legacy pollution
- **13** program(s) delivering critical clean water and wastewater infrastructure benefits

Overall, agencies are making concrete, tangible improvements to benefit disadvantaged communities across America through the Justice40 Initiative. These investments are resulting in cleaner air and water, more affordable clean energy, good-paying jobs, and other results that people are seeing and feeling today and into the future.

¹*In the Phase Two Scorecard, the Justice40 Initiative section contains information about federal investments that Congress has funded through both discretionary and mandatory appropriations, as well as supplemental appropriations, such as those that Congress made in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Pub. L. 117-58) and the Inflation Reduction Act (Pub. L. 117-169). The Phase Two Scorecard includes information on each agency's budget authority (that is, the total amount of funds that Congress has appropriated to the agency to spend on Justice40 covered programs) and the period of availability (that is, the period of time over which*

Congress has authorized the agency to spend the funds).

In some cases, agencies may not yet have the authority to spend the full amount indicated, such as when Congress has appropriated funds that will only become available in future Fiscal Years. Agencies provided the data presented here in spring 2024, and therefore the data does not reflect the annual appropriations for Fiscal Year 2024 that Congress made in March 2024.

Thus, the information that the Phase Two Scorecard presents in this section includes what the agency has available to spend in its Justice40 covered programs (i.e., its budget authority). These figures represent the total funding amount for all Justice40 covered programs, not only the portion that benefits disadvantaged communities.

Justice40 Covered Program Highlights ([show less](#) ^)

The Department of Agriculture is delivering benefits, or is projected to deliver benefits, for disadvantaged communities through grants or awards made through its Justice40 covered programs, such as:

Farm Service Agency's Former Commodity Credit Corporation Grain Storage Hazardous Waste Cleanup Program

In FY 2023, this program allocated over \$2.3 million (55% of its total fiscal year budget) to perform remediation and reduction of legacy pollution from grain fumigants (pesticides) on private lands in disadvantaged communities. This included investments made in 37 sites across Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Workforce Development Programs

In FY 2023, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Hispanic-serving Institutions Education Grants Program (one of NIFA's Justice40 covered programs) invested over \$15 million in higher education programs. These programs promote academic advancement and professional and scientific workforce development focused on food production, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences.

[Learn more](#) 

Risk Management Agency's Education Partnership Program

In FY 2023, Risk Management Agency provided \$6.7 million to 24 cooperative partners through the Risk Management Education Partnership Program. The majority of these partners help educate underserved, small-scale, and organic producers on farm risk management and climate-smart farming practices.

[Learn more](#) 

Funding Announcements

([show less](#) ^)

The Department of Agriculture has:

- **Over 94,000** funding announcement(s) covered under the Justice40 Initiative
- **Over \$24 billion** available through Justice40 covered program(s) funding announcements²

National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Education Competitive Grants Program

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) program promotes and strengthens the ability of Alaska Native-Serving Institutions and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions to carry out education, applied research, and related community development programs.

Learn more 

Rural Development's Multifamily Housing Rental Assistance

The Rural Development's Multifamily Housing Rental Assistance program provides payments to owners of USDA-financed Rural Rental Housing and Farm Labor Housing on behalf of low-income tenants unable to pay their full rent and utilities fees.

[Learn more](#) 

Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentive Program provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns, such as: improved water and air quality; increased soil health; improved or created wildlife habitat; and mitigation against drought and increasing weather volatility.

[Learn more](#) 

²Further, this section also includes funding that was made available through an agency's Justice40 covered programs in FY 2023. The funding was made available through various mechanisms, like grants, loans, agreements, contracts, notices of funding opportunity, and other funding announcements. These funding announcements were from Justice40 covered programs that were funded through discretionary and mandatory appropriations, as well as supplemental appropriations, such as those

enacted under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (Pub. L. 117-58) and the Inflation Reduction Act (Pub. L. 117-169).

Covered Program Design or Modification ([show less](#) ^)

The Department of Agriculture made program or design modifications to maximize benefits and/or remove barriers or constraints for disadvantaged communities, such as:

Revised Natural Resources Conservation Service Program Policy to Reduce Heirs' Property Barriers

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) updated its policies and established a form for heirs (who inherit family land as joint owners) to document their 'control of land.' Use of the optional "Heirs' Property Ownership Applicant Self-Verification Form" helps heirs to certify ownership interest in order to access financial assistance for structural or vegetative conservation practices and activities. This form can be used with the following NRCS programs, all of which are covered under the Justice40 Initiative: Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, Agricultural Management Assistance, Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

Rural Energy for America Program Technical Assistance Grants

The Rural Energy for America Program Technical Assistance Grant (REAP TAG) program supports technical assistance for potential REAP applicants. Grant recipients help applicants register with SAM.gov (a requirement to receive Federal contracts), complete applications, plan construction activities, and develop environmental reports. This technical assistance can address historic barriers Tribes and underserved organizations and entities in disadvantaged communities or distressed areas have experienced when applying for funding opportunities.

Risk Management Agency Risk Management Education and Outreach Technical Assistance

Through contractor support, Risk Management Agency provides technical and writing assistance to organizations applying for agency grants. This service is available to underserved producer groups, agriculture-related non-profits, Tribal colleges and universities, Tribal higher education programs, 1890 Land Grant Universities, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities.

Justice40 In Action ([show less ^](#))

The Department of Agriculture is delivering benefits, or is projected to deliver benefits, for disadvantaged communities through the Justice40 Initiative, including:



**Farm
Service
Agency
Cooperativ
e
Agreement
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Technical**

Rainwater Harvesting Techniques

The Southern Plains Climate Hub and Natural Resources Conservation Service in Texas hosted demonstrations and provided information on techniques for rainwater harvesting for approximately 120 members of rural communities. Members of seven Native American Tribes participated in workshops and subsequent one-on-one discussions. Hub employees helped with the design of systems tailored to Tribal partners who anticipate using rainwater harvest and storage to boost water reserves for wildfire control, livestock, and small-scale horticulture, among other uses.

[Learn more](#) 

Assistance

*Photo credit:
Preston Keres*

In FY 2023, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) awarded almost \$1.8 million in cooperative agreements to six partner organizations for outreach and technical assistance to promote awareness and understanding of the Transition Incentives Program among agricultural communities. FSA offers this service to help underserved

Success in Aquaponic Farming During Extreme Weather Events

In 2021, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Distance Education Grants Program funded a project at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez focused on training Extension agents, farmers, and community members in aquaponic production. The result of aquaponics is a steady supply of fresh fish and vegetables that are available in local communities throughout the year and can be grown in just about any environment. Drawing on relationships, capacity, and infrastructure developed through this project, during extreme weather in the summer of 2023, five aquaponics sites were kept running and hundreds of fish were saved. To date, eight Extension agents and 58 community members have been trained through this project.

[Learn more](#) 

farmers – including farmers in disadvantaged communities – access land and keep agricultural lands in production.

[Learn more](#) 

Forest Service's National Revegetation Effort in Cooperative Forestry

The Forest Service's National Revegetation Effort in Cooperative Forestry (also known as the National Seed Strategy Program) assists states, territories, and Tribes to fund nurseries for native trees and seeds. In FY 2022 and FY 2023, \$16 million was allocated to 35 states, four territories and commonwealths, and seven Tribes. Funding is being used to purchase equipment, replace aging infrastructure, adopt new methods to boost nursery productivity, and increase nursery capacity. The Forest Service is working closely with the Intertribal Nursery Council to share technical assistance in cultivation of culturally significant plants and trees.

[Learn more](#) 

Environmental and Civil Rights Protection

Federal agencies are advancing environmental justice by carrying out their responsibilities under the law to identify and address disproportionate and adverse public health and environmental, climate-related, and cumulative impacts on communities with environmental justice concerns. Agencies are working to ensure that all communities experience the protection of our country's bedrock environmental laws. The following information reflects some of the environmental and civil rights work at the Department of Agriculture has done in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Environmental Justice ([show less](#) ^)

This section demonstrates progress on environmental protections, such as the National Environmental Policy Act, at the Department of Agriculture in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

USDA's Departmental Regulation on Environmental Justice (DR 5600-002) requires agencies to incorporate environmental justice considerations into their National Environmental Policy Act

What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider and disclose

(NEPA) compliance – including (1) addressing disproportionate and adverse effects from USDA programs and activities, and (2) providing opportunities for affected communities to participate in decisions related to their health or the quality of their environment. Multiple USDA agencies have manuals, handbooks, and other forms of guidance to support engagement with communities and consideration of environmental justice during NEPA processes.

the environmental health and community impacts of certain decisions or actions before taking them.

[Learn more](#) 

Project Modifications

- **Numerous** project modification(s) where environmental justice concerns were raised during NEPA process, including:

Riparian Buffer Modification

Riparian buffers were modified in the North Fork Nooksack Vegetation Management Project on the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest as a result of ongoing meetings with the Nooksack Tribe and Lummi Nation. Riparian buffers deliver benefits such as increased wildlife diversity, improved water quality, reduced flood damage, better sediment, nutrient, pesticide, and animal waste filtration, riverbank stabilization, and diversification of income for landowners.

Bull Trout Habitat Restoration with the Yakama Nation

The Yakama Nation is providing technical review of designs and is a member of the interdisciplinary team for the Gold Creek Valley Restoration Project on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, providing expertise in hydrology and bull trout passage.

Training

- **Over 23** agency training(s) on how to consider environmental justice considerations during NEPA reviews
- **Over 1,529** employees trained on how to consider environmental justice during NEPA reviews

For example, during agency trainings on how to consider environmental justice during NEPA review processes, participants gained increased awareness and understanding of laws, regulations, and executive orders related to environmental justice. Trainings equipped employees with practical methods for assessing potential disproportionate and adverse impacts of proposed activities on communities with environmental justice concerns during the NEPA review processes.

Environmental or Health

Protection ([show less](#) ^)

This section demonstrates progress by the Department of Agriculture on environmental or health protection that also advances environmental justice in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

Farmers are now eligible for further protection against damaging tropical storms through the Risk Management Agency's Hurricane Insurance Protection-Wind Index Endorsement.

Former Commodity Credit Corp Contaminated Grain Storage Facilities

In FY 2023, \$4.2 million (\$2.3 million of which was spent in disadvantaged communities) was awarded to address legacy grain fumigant (pesticide) contamination released at former USDA grain storage facilities that is impacting rural lands and groundwater supplies. Funding allocated to disadvantaged communities includes the construction of remediation systems for the protection of community drinking water supplies and clean indoor air at impacted residences.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Emergency and Regulatory Compliance Service

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Emergency and Regulatory Compliance Service program staff conduct annual safety trainings for Safety Coordinators and Site Supervisors, targeting hazardous chemical management and disposal procedures.

USDA's Agriculture Priorities & Allocation Systems

USDA's Agriculture Priorities & Allocation Systems supports national defense and emergency preparedness related to food and food resources.

Civil Rights and Environmental Justice ([show less ^](#))

This section demonstrates progress on civil rights related to environmental justice, for example, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or relevant laws other than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act at the

Department of Agriculture in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

In FY 2023, USDA opened and closed one Americans with Disabilities Act investigation related to access to a National Forest.

In FY 2023, USDA's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights issued Departmental Regulation 4330-003,

[Nondiscrimination in USDA-Conducted Programs and Activities](#)

. This regulation establishes policies and provides guidance on the Department's prohibitions against discrimination in its programs, services, benefits, and resources delivered directly to the public by USDA employees. In FY 2023, the USDA and its Mission Areas and agencies issued Language Access Plans. The Department is committed to strengthening its procedures for ensuring that individuals with limited English proficiency have meaningful access to USDA's programs, services, and activities.

Title VI and Environmental Justice ([show less](#) ^)

This section demonstrates progress on civil rights related to environmental justice, such as under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, at the Department of Agriculture in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

**What is
Title VI of
the Civil
Rights Act
of 1964?**
Title VI of

is from October 2022 to September 2023.

Strong USDA Title VI civil rights enforcement procedures are essential to delivering environmental justice. USDA’s Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights and agency civil rights compliance staff provide trainings, routinely evaluate Title VI concerns, and collaborate with federal partners to resolve Title VI environmental justice-related complaints that allege discriminatory behavior.

- **1** closed Title VI investigation(s) or resolution agreement(s) related to environmental justice

Training

- **85** agency training(s) on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and environmental justice

the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that no person be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance on account of race, color, or national origin.

Centering Environmental Justice in Decision-Making

This section demonstrates progress on

community engagement (e.g., partnerships with non-federal organizations, technical assistance, and public processes) and partnership and consultation with Tribal Nations at the Department of Agriculture in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

USDA's external engagements and partnerships with communities, community-based organizations, educational institutions, and other non-federal organizations, include: In FY 2023, the Agricultural Research Service and the Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College entered a partnership to conduct research on traditional varieties of seeds with ties to the Tribe. The partnership, and resulting cooperative agreement, is an important step toward supporting Indigenous Seed Sovereignty. USDA's 2501 Grant Program supports more than 150 grantee organizations, including community-based organizations, working to connect underserved communities and those with environmental justice concerns to USDA programs. The USDA-led Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate initiative (AIM for Climate) is a network of over 600 non-federal partners and 55 countries committing investments in climate-smart agriculture research, development, and scaling. Many of the partnerships promote environmental justice through equitable access to resilient food systems.

All USDA agencies conducted outreach events, such as listening sessions, training sessions, and workshops to enhance awareness to their programs and services, including events targeted to and hosted within underserved and disadvantaged communities and other communities with environmental justice concerns. Many agencies within USDA have taken steps to improve access to information for communities with environmental justice concerns, including the Agricultural Research Service, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Climate Hubs, Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, Food Safety and Inspection Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Risk Management Agency, and Rural Development. Agencies have also provided targeted technical assistance directly and through funded partners to help underserved and disadvantaged communities access and apply for programs and services.

Technical Assistance ([show less](#) ^)

- **Over 4,900** technical assistance outreach event(s) to improve access and information about federal programs related to environmental justice

For more information on the Department of Agriculture's technical assistance events,

please visit <https://www.usda.gov>

National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Agricultural Research Service Workshops

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture and Agricultural Research Service partnered to conduct a series of capacity-building workshops for [Historically Black](#) and [Tribal](#) Colleges and Universities to enhance their financial and project management capacity. The events, held at University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and Fort Valley State University, attracted 165 participants.

Strengthening the Food Supply Chain with Small and Very Small Establishments

The Food Safety and Inspection Service hosted five roundtables, reaching nearly 400 participants, to increase access to regulatory information and best practices to maintain and enhance food safety and strengthen the food supply chain with small and very small establishments. Interpretation, translation, and sign language were available to ensure the roundtables were accessible to all attendees.

[Learn more](#) 

Southwest Climate Hub Workshop and Course for Tribal Members

The Southwest Climate Hub held two workshops, attended by 117 individuals, to engage with Tribal members on drought resilience tools and strategies. The Southwest Climate Hub also supported development of a Train-the-Trainer course on Beekeeping and Pollinator Stewardship for Indigenous Stewards, which was hosted at the Institute of American Indian Arts and had 33 enrollees.

Learn more 

Public Processes ([show less ^](#))

- **Numerous** public process(es) related to environmental justice, e.g., requests for information or listening sessions, including:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture Listening Sessions

Through listening sessions, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture gleaned insights on: the need for expanded programs focused on health equity; the need for expanded research identifying priorities and needs of marginalized communities and those with environmental justice concerns; and the need to continue learning from a range of Traditional Ecological Knowledge related to agroecology and sustainability.

Risk Management Agency Island Working Group

Through engagements in Puerto Rico, the Risk Management Agency (RMA) assessed the effectiveness of crop insurance on the island, resulting in modifications such as the expansion of pineapple coverage and allowing for sales of the commodity throughout the year. Through engagements in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam, RMA assessed risk for local producers currently without access to Federal crop insurance. This information-gathering will inform the creation of insurance policies to meet the needs of local farmers and ranchers in these areas.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Easement Summit

The Natural Resources Conservation Service, alongside the American Farmland Trust, co-hosted an easement summit with a diverse range of partners that implement the Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement programs. The purpose of this summit was to obtain feedback on process improvement and streamlining efforts, program barriers, stewardship trends and challenges, and identification of training needs to further implement agricultural land protection programs.

Partnership and Consultation with Tribal Nations ([show less ^](#))

This section demonstrates progress on Tribal partnerships and consultations at the Department of Agriculture, including steps that that agencies take to respect Tribal sovereignty and ensure government-to-government consultation on federal policies in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

Consultations are formal, Nation-to-Nation

meetings between USDA (representing the Federal Government) and officials from among the 574 Federally Recognized Tribal Nations. USDA agencies and offices host consultations throughout the year to hear from Tribal Nations about how USDA policies and programs can better support Indian Country. USDA consultation processes are directed by USDA's Department Regulation 1350-002, Tribal Consultation, Coordination, and Collaboration.

- **54** Tribal Consultation(s) related to environmental justice

USDA Departmental Tribal Consultations on Barriers

In FY 2023, the USDA's Office of Tribal Relations held the Tribal Equity and Barriers Consultation that built off USDA's 2021 and 2022 consultations. During this consultation, the Department reported out on previously identified barriers to accessing USDA programs, and Tribal leaders discussed additional and new barriers Tribes had identified.

Farm Service Agency Tribal Consultations on Barriers

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) has participated in the USDA Annual Consultation on Barriers for three consecutive years. Outcomes for FSA include a pilot program created to place Tribal agriculture technical assistance experts directly with Tribes and a new online Tribal Partnerships Page. The site facilitates access to opportunities for land access, Indigenous representation, conservation partnerships, and support for Tribal producers and Tribal food sovereignty.

Rural Development Consultation on Inflation Reduction Act Funded Programs

Rural Development (RD) held two consecutive years of Tribal consultations on implementation of the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), the Powering Affordable Clean Energy Program (PACE), and the Empowering Rural America (New ERA) Program. As a result of the consultations, for example, RD increased the forgivable loan threshold for Tribal PACE projects to 60 percent.

- **65** Tribal listening sessions and other engagements related to environmental justice

For example, USDA hosted Tribal listening sessions and engagements focused on, among other topics: better meeting the needs of Indigenous producers; increasing equitable access to USDA programs and services by Tribal and Indigenous communities; USDA's Department Regulation 1340-002, Consolidating USDA Agencies' Services on Indian Reservations, which allows Tribal Nations to request consolidated USDA service on Tribal lands; the Carbon Partnership

Program, where participants discussed the new national program and potential Tribal implications; and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, where discussions focused on how the program can contribute to Tribal Nations' land stewardship efforts and the availability of dedicated funding for Tribal Nations.

Training

- **Numerous** agency training(s) on Tribal Consultation or working with Tribes and Indigenous Peoples to advance environmental justice
- **Over 10,660** employees trained on Tribal Consultation or working with Tribes and Indigenous Peoples to advance environmental justice

For example, Tribal trainings educated employees and provided them resources related to, among other topics: cultural competency and working effectively with Tribes, Native Alaskan, and Indigenous communities; Tribal consultation; honoring Nation-to-Nation Trust Responsibilities; respecting Tribal Sovereignty; understanding the complex and challenging history of federal and Tribal relationships; and respecting and leveraging Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Institutionalizing Environmental Justice

This section demonstrates progress to institutionalize environmental justice at the Department of Agriculture including to implement [Executive Order 14008](#) and [Executive Order 14096](#) , in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, which is from October 2022 to September 2023.

Overview

To advance environmental justice institutionally, USDA has evaluated policies and procedures to identify and address disproportionate and adverse impacts to communities with environmental justice concerns and barriers to these communities accessing agency programs and services. USDA has continued to expand consultation, outreach, engagement, collaboration, and participation opportunities targeted to Tribes and communities with environmental justice concerns, and to make these efforts fundamental components of program operations, planning, and decision-making activities, including during NEPA processes. USDA has continued to expand targeted financial and technical assistance opportunities for Tribes and communities with environmental justice concerns as well as

Photo credit:
Lance Cheung

Rural Development's Rural Data Gateway

The Rural Data Gateway makes the Mission Area's data for rural projects easier to

continued to expand and deliver department and agency trainings focused on environmental justice and Tribal consultation. Finally, USDA has continued to develop internal and external resources and tools to support USDA's work on environmental justice.

- **Over 238** staff who work on environmental justice, either in a full- or part-time capacity
- **69** new or strengthened office(s) or program(s) on environmental justice

Training

- **50** agency training(s) for staff on environmental justice
- **Over 7,700** employee(s) trained on environmental justice

For example, environmental justice trainings had goals such as educating employees about the concepts of environmental justice and injustice, equipping employees with practical methods for addressing environmental justice, stressing the importance of early, meaningful engagement with communities with environmental justice concerns, and informing employees about relevant laws and executive orders.

Advancing Environmental Justice Policy ([show less](#) ^)

access by its partners and people living in rural communities. It includes investment dashboards that show how USDA's Rural Development Mission Area – which includes the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, Rural Housing Service, and Rural Utilities Service – has supported local and regional economies over the last 11

- **Has** issued or updated policy, guidance, or directives related to environmental justice (internal or external)

Agricultural Research Service National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Guidance

The Agricultural Research Service published NEPA guidance that included consideration of environmental justice issues for construction, real property, and agricultural research projects.

years through 69 programs. The Gateway's easy-to-use dashboards highlight critical Rural Development investments. The data can help users analyze investment trends and help USDA better target resources to the rural communities that are most in need.

Learn more 

Natural Resources Conservation Service Justice40 Guidance for State Employees

The Natural Resources Conservation Service developed internal federal guidance for federal agency staff working with state/local offices to provide background on and highlight the agency's commitment to the Justice40 Initiative. The guidance describes resources for identifying disadvantaged communities and explains the importance of prioritizing outreach to and engagement with these communities.

Rural Development's Priority of Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Justice

Rural Development reaffirmed its Mission Area priority of “Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Justice,” which specifically focuses on mitigating the causes of climate change and increasing communities’ resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities. The Mission Area established the priorities through policy communication and inclusion in regulatory funding notices throughout the year.

- **Has** assessed barriers and obstacles related to regulations, policies, or practices, including historical inequities
- For more information on how the Department of Agriculture has removed barriers for communities with environmental justice concerns, please visit <https://www.usda.gov/equity/action-plan>
- Over the past four years **is working** to create an Environmental Justice

Strategic Plan pursuant to
[Executive Order 14096](#)

Advancing Environmental Justice Tools or Resources ([show less](#) ^)

- **Numerous** tool(s) or resources that advance environmental justice, including access to health, environmental or other impacts, such as:

Forest Service Justice 40 Accomplishment Tracker

This dashboard provides a geospatial visualization of the Forest Service's planned or completed accomplishments by its 19 Justice40 covered programs. Project landscapes are overlaid with the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool to inform and monitor the proportion of activities implemented in disadvantaged areas.

Food and Nutrition Service's Nutrition Education and Local Food Access Dashboard

The dashboard provides a county-level visualization of the Food and Nutrition Service's nutrition support. It can be used to support collaborative cross-program nutrition technical assistance. It can also be used to develop nutrition action plans geared to target and optimize resources. In addition to the above, it can also be used to identify potential partners and to expand the use and impacts of best practices.

Learn more 

Natural Resources Conservation Service's Priority Data Layers

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) developed internal data tools to evaluate program delivery to underserved people and disadvantaged communities, which empower the agency to make data-driven decisions to remove barriers and inequities in programs and services. The data tools are designed to evaluate NRCS program delivery alongside census and other population data.

Advancing Institutional Partnerships or Federal Advisory Committees ([show less](#) ^)

- **11** new or strengthened internal agency working group(s), committee(s), or partnership(s) to advance environmental justice, or new federal advisory committee(s) on environmental justice
- **8** new or existing federal advisory committee(s) related to environmental justice

USDA's Equity Commission

The Equity Commission was established to advise the Secretary of Agriculture and provide USDA with an analysis of how its programs, policies, systems, structures, and practices create barriers to inclusion or access, contribute to systemic discrimination, or exacerbate or perpetuate racial, economic, health, and social disparities. The Equity Commission issued an [Interim Recommendation Report](#) in FY 2023 and its Final Recommendation Report in 2024.

Learn more 

USDA's Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers

The Advisory Committee on Minority Farmers (ACMF) works in the interest of the public to ensure that all farmers have equal access to USDA programs. In 2023, ACMF issued a [report](#) that includes recommendations for Farm Service Agency, Rural Development agencies, and other agencies within the Department for improving access to programs and services for minority farmers.

Learn more 

USDA's Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

USDA's Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production advises the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor, and emerging agriculture practices. The Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee (UAIPAC) is one of several ways that USDA is extending support to urban agriculture, including around issues of equity, climate resilience, and nutrition access.

Learn more 

Interagency Collaboration ([show less](#) ^)

USDA participates in the [White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council](#) (IAC), which President Biden established in 2021 and expanded in 2023 through

executive orders on tackling the climate crisis and environmental justice.

USDA also participates in the National Science and Technology Council's Environmental Justice Subcommittee, launched in 2023 as provided by President Biden's executive order on environmental justice. The purpose of the Environmental Justice Subcommittee is to address the need for a coordinated federal strategy to identify and address gaps in science, data, and research related to environmental justice.

In FY 2023, Forest Service became a co-sponsor, alongside federal and non-federal partners, of the 21st location of the Environmental Protection Agency's Urban Waters Federal Partnership, the Walnut Creek Watershed in Raleigh, North Carolina. This event served as the launch event for the White House Campaign for Environmental Justice. Encroachment on the Walnut Creek floodplain causes severe flooding and impairs water quality in low-lying, downstream communities in Southeastern Raleigh, many of which are disadvantaged.

The Urban Waters Partnership reconnects urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by

improving coordination among federal agencies. The Partnership also collaborates with community-led revitalization efforts to improve the nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental, and social benefits.

The Department of Agriculture worked side-by-side with other federal agencies to advance a whole of government approach to environmental justice, including:

Rural Partners Network

USDA's Rural Development leads the Rural Partners Network (RPN) in collaboration with 24 federal agencies and regional commissions. RPN helps rural communities find resources and funding to create local jobs, build infrastructure, and support long-term economic stability on their own terms. The RPN puts federal staff, known as "Community Liaisons," on the ground to support economically challenged communities and provide expertise to leverage federal programs.

[Learn more](#) 

Forest Service Community Navigator Initiative

The Community Navigator Initiative works to ensure that underserved communities, Tribes, and other targeted communities benefit from the Forest Service’s (FS) Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act investments. To support the Program, FS initiated an interagency Community Navigators “Community of Practice,” which brings together federal agencies with similar “navigator” programs (e.g., the [Rural Partners Network](#) and the Environmental Protection Agency’s [Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers](#)) to share best practices and support a whole of government approach in aiding underserved communities.

Learn more 

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[Whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov)

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