

FEDERAL AGENCY PERSPECTIVES ON ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY



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DR. MELINDA DOWNING

Environmental Justice Program Manager,
Department of Energy (DOE)

*Advancing the Department of Energy's
Environmental Justice Program*

Dr. Melinda Downing currently serves as the DOE's EJ Program Manager. She carries out her duties in the Office of Legacy Management (LM). Prior to transferring to LM, Dr. Downing carried out her duties in the Office of Intergovernmental and Public Accountability within the Office of Environmental Management (EM) at DOE's Headquarters in Washington, D.C. During this tenure, she served as the Director of the Office of EM's Center for Environmental Management Information, a clearinghouse for EM and EJ information. Prior to joining the Office of EM, she was on the staff of the Secretary of Energy's Office, serving as the Administrative Specialist for the Secretary's Chief of Staff. Dr. Downing has managed and conducted Public Participation and EJ and Tribal Training at DOE Headquarters and Field offices across the nation. Dr. Downing also represents the Department as a member of the White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council. Dr. Downing has 50 years of Federal Service and she has received numerous accolades and awards in recognition of her EJ achievements and her dedication as a public servant. Most notably, she received an honorary doctorate from Allen University. She has served on many committees, was Employee of the Year in 1990, served as a member of the Board of Directors for the Energy Child Care Development Center, and has received numerous Awards of Excellence for her work in Public Participation and efforts to provide small towns with computers, technology training and technical assistance. She has also received the Certificate of Award from the U.S. House of Representatives and Congressional Black Caucus for outstanding support of the National Environmental Policy Commission; the National Conference of Black Mayors Award; and the National Campaign for Tolerance Honor for leading the way toward a more just America. Dr. Downing is a native of Savannah, Tennessee, and lives with her husband James in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.



DR. MATTHEW S. TEJADA

Director, Office of Environmental Justice,
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

EJ at The EPA Today

Dr. Matthew S. Tejada is the Deputy Assistant Administrator (DAA) for Environmental Justice within EPA's national program office for Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights (OEJECR). Dr. Tejada joined EPA in March of 2013 as a career senior executive and Director of the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), a position he held until the reorganization of OEJ into OEJECR in September of 2022. As DAA, Dr. Tejada provides leadership for EPA's EJ portfolio, including the integration of EJ throughout all of EPA's policies, programs, and activities, coordination and alignment of EJ priorities with the external civil rights programmatic priorities, in addition to leading EJ efforts with other federal agencies, states, Tribes, local governments, and other stakeholders. Before his career at EPA, Dr. Tejada spent over five years as Executive Director of the environmental justice advocacy Air Alliance Houston in the Houston and Texas Gulf Coast area. Dr. Tejada received his master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Oxford, where he was a member of St. Antony's College, and a BA in English from the University of Texas at Austin. He then served two years in the Peace Corps in Bulgaria. Dr. Tejada is a native of Ft. Worth, Texas, lives with his wife Andrea in Silver Spring, Maryland, and is the proud father of Nia Tejada.



MR. SACHIN SHAH

Manager of the Social & Economic Drivers Program
for the Water Mission Area and Environmental
Justice Science Advisor, U.S. Geological Survey

***A New Paradigm for USGS Actionable
Science for Environmental Justice***

Mr. Sachin Shah serves as the Manager of the Social and Economic Drivers Program for the USGS Water Mission Area and the Environmental Justice Science Advisor for the USGS EJ Leadership Team. He works at the intersection of water resources, socioeconomics, and social justice to understand the human dimensions of water security and risk both domestically and abroad in areas such as the U.S. Gulf Coast, Mekong River Basin, South Asia, and Ukraine. As Environmental Justice Science Advisor, Mr. Shah has provided a framework for developing equity-focused research approaches and helped create the first USGS Environmental Justice Task Force. Mr. Shah has over 20 years of hydrology, public policy, and international development experience with the U.S. Geological Survey, World Bank Water Program, and the Council of Energy Environment and Water. Mr. Shah received his degrees from the University of Texas at Austin, earning a BS in Hydrogeology and an MA in International Development and Social Policy from the UT-Austin LBJ School of Public Affairs. He is a native of Houston, Texas, and lives with his wife in Austin, Texas.

ABOUT AERC

The Association of Ecosystem Research Centers (AERC) aims to support and encourage cooperation in research and training among ecosystem centers; strengthen ecosystem research and its applications; and advance understanding of ecosystem science at local, regional, national and international levels.

AERC brings together a network of U.S. research programs in universities and private, state and federal laboratories that conduct research, provide training and analyze policy at the ecosystem level of environmental science and natural resources management. These centers are located throughout the U.S. mainland, as well as Alaska and Puerto Rico. These organizations conduct a major share of the ecosystem research in the United States and represent hundreds of scientists. Together these scientists conduct a major share of the ecosystem research in the United States.

The major environmental and natural-resources problems facing the earth - global climatic change, declining biodiversity, spreading surface and groundwater pollution, acid precipitation, desertification, declining fisheries - are so extensive that they can only be addressed on a regional, continental, or global scale, and with a broadly coordinated interdisciplinary focus. Such scales and focus imply the need for extensive communication; and for exchange of views and collaboration on research, training, and policy needs.

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