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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) defines environmental justice (EJ) as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” While the USEPA’s Office of Environmental Justice celebrated its 25th anniversary last year, and many states and local governments adopted EJ policies and practices throughout the 1990s, the roots of the EJ movement trace back to the 1950s and 1960s civil rights movement. Today, decades later, communities across the country continue the work to address the disproportionately adverse human health and environmental impacts in overburdened communities and, going forward, to integrate environmental justice into policy, program, and project planning.

Climate change impacts will exacerbate environmental and human health effects with consequences such as higher average temperatures, heat waves, and longer and more severe droughts punctuated by high-precipitation years; more severe wet-weather storm events increasing the chance and impact of flooding; and higher levels of air pollution. These climate change hazards will directly and indirectly impact critical infrastructure, public health, natural systems, and regional economies. In many areas, disadvantaged communities will be more susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change and have fewer resources with which to prepare for and recover such impacts.

Recently, California furthered its commitment to advancing EJ goals by establishing a Bureau of Environmental Justice within the State’s Department of Justice. The Bureau’s purpose is to represent and empower those who are advocating for public health, safety, and prosperity in their communities; it will focus on environmental compliance, remediating contaminated drinking water, reducing exposure to toxins in the environment and consumer products, protecting the air and water from industrial pollution, and challenging the federal government’s actions that repeal any environmental health protection. California’s move helps renew attention to a persistent issue.

It is heartening, then, to see concrete actions advancing at various levels of government and in communities across ESA’s geographic reach. This issue of our newsletter spotlights positive progress putting EJ principles into action—on an urban wastewater treatment plant upgrade, a community park, and a Climate Action Plan Framework for 27 cities. In each case, these projects both reduce existing environmental impacts on disadvantaged communities and help usher in a new era of public outreach and input that integrates EJ principles into policy and project planning and achieves “meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

Onward,
Leslie Moulton-Post
Biosolids Digester Facilities Project
Gains Community Support with SFPUC’s Environmental Justice Report

Alexandra Thompson  Jill Hamilton

Originally constructed in 1952, the Southeast Treatment Plant in San Francisco’s Bayview neighborhood receives 80 percent of the city’s wastewater and stormwater flows, treating 60 million gallons per day (mgd) on average.

During a rainstorm, this flow quadruples, reaching up to 250 mgd. In an area where the next 6.0 or greater magnitude earthquake isn’t a matter of “if” but “when,” the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) implemented the Sewer System Improvement Program (SSIP) in August 2012—a 20-year citywide $2.7 billion improvement program to upgrade aging infrastructure in terms of seismic retrofitting, efficiency, reliability, and more.

At the Southeast Plant, one of the SFPUC’s three sewer treatment facilities, the improvements include the new Biosolids Digester Facilities Project (BDFP). The BDFP will replace outdated solids treatment facilities with more reliable, efficient, and modern technologies, including new digesters and new facilities to capture and treat odors more effectively. The new system will maximize energy recovery for the production of heat, steam, and electrical power, which will more than offset the system’s energy demand. In addition, the BDFP will make several “good neighbor” improvements: locate the digesters farther away from residences, limit project-generated odors to the Southeast Plant fence line, and make visual improvements in and around the Southeast Plant.
ESA•Orion JV prepared the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the BDFP (certified in March 2018) to address potential environmental impacts as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The SFPUC asked ESA to prepare its first-ever Environmental Justice Analysis for Bayview-Hunters Point (EJ report) to address socioeconomic topics and related environmental and health burdens, including an in-depth evaluation of the project in light of SFPUC’s Environmental Justice Policy, its Community Benefits Policy and Program, and the Southeast Community Mitigation Agreement that followed expansion projects at the Southeast Plant in the 1970s and 1980s. This neighborhood, home to a historically large African-American population, is situated near the Hunters Point Naval Shipyards as well as a number of other industrial uses that have caused concerns for the community’s environmental health over the years.

Partnering with the Community

One of SFPUC’s priorities was to acknowledge and include information produced by past grassroots community efforts to explore environmental justice. The initial steps in developing the EJ report began with an in-depth analysis of existing conditions in Bayview-Hunters Point by reviewing prior reports by community groups and city departments (e.g., public health, environment, transportation) and data from the U.S. Census Bureau and California Environmental Protection Agency’s CalEnviroScreen tool.

Beyond the standard environmental justice analysis that describes the community’s minority population and low-income status (the typical indicators used to identify a community where environmental justice may be a concern), this report then dives deeper into the existing environmental justice challenges facing the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood, in particular those related to pollution and environmental degradation, neighborhood infrastructure and the availability of services and community support, and demographics and health statistics.

To determine what indicators were of particular interest to the community and to identify existing data sources, SFPUC and ESA staff met with the SFPUC’s Citizens Advisory Committee and other neighborhood-specific committees. Committee members shared feedback prioritizing economic, educational, and air- and water-pollutant-related indicators, and provided important perspective about measuring and evaluating burdens such as nuisance odors. Community meetings were ongoing and continuous throughout the process, where we provided updates on the report and described in detail how their input was implemented.

Looking Ahead for the BDFP

At the EIR certification hearing in March, Harlan Kelly, SFPUC General Manager, and Commission members praised the ground-breaking EJ report, public outreach, and community benefit process. The SFPUC had already been making strong and deliberate efforts to engage with the community members at a meaningful level for years, and their hands-on approach made the EJ report even more of a success; it was truly a culmination of all of SFPUC’s efforts.

In fact, no one spoke out against the BDFP at the hearing meeting; if anything, the community expressed an eagerness to get it started. To say this is an unusual public response for a wastewater treatment plant project located near a residential neighborhood is an understatement.

To learn more about the EJ report process and how our team managed the EIR and EJ report in conjunction, please reach out to Alexandra Thompson and Jill Hamilton.

“This is the first [EJ report] that we were able to do, and I’m really impressed with it.”

- Harlan L. Kelly, Jr.
General Manager, SFPUC
(from audio recording of March 13th Public Hearing)

The existing digesters (pictured) will be replaced with more reliable, efficient, and modern systems that will capture and treat odors more effectively. The new system will also maximize energy recovery for the production of heat, steam, and electrical power, more than offsetting the system’s energy demand.
Earth Day 2018

From Tampa’s Water Works Park (Ulele Springs, pictured), to the Hamilton Wetlands in Novato, to Oakland’s Lake Merritt and Fruitvale Bridge, and even Sacramento’s Creek Week, we planted, weeded, and cleaned up to help promote a healthier environment for our communities.

Hats off to our Tampa crew! For Earth Day, the team headed to the Water Works Park in Tampa to improve this vital habitat for manatees and freshwater species. This site holds a special place in our hearts because ESA initiated its restoration and secured 100% of the grant funding on behalf of the City of Tampa. We are proud of the success of this award-winning restoration project!

In Case You Missed It on Your Feed

ESA drones take flight! Our new video provides a unique perspective on several of our projects from coast to coast.

WATCH THE VIDEO

ESA’s Jason Quitiquit White presented at this year’s Salmonid Restoration Federation conference, sharing his experience of implementing salmonid habitat restoration in Dry Creek—the largest tributary in California’s Russian River watershed. Check out a flyover drone video we posted of the completed project!

WATCH THE VIDEO

Click the icons below to connect with us!
On Former Landfill, Portland Park Takes Shape with Inclusive Vision and Unique Public-Nonprofit Partnership

It has taken a decade, but thanks to a remarkable partnership between neighborhood activists, a nonprofit developer, and the City of Portland, a landfill in northeast Portland has been transformed into a park.

And not just any park: when it opens on Saturday, June 30, the 25-acre Cully Park will feature community gardens and sports fields, fitness courses, play areas and picnic areas, an off-leash dog park, a native prairie habitat restoration area, and a Native American Gathering Garden.

Because it is on a former landfill, the site is higher than surrounding areas, offering rare vantage points to enjoy the region’s signature geographic features, such as the Columbia River Gorge, Mount St. Helens, and Mount Hood. “This is going to be a destination,” said Alan Hipolito, executive director of Cully Park’s nonprofit developer Verde, as quoted in the local The Hollywood Star newspaper. Building on a landfill raised health and safety concerns, and ESA and its partners were challenged to develop specialized approaches to landscape design and civil engineering.

The biggest challenges facing Cully Park arose years before the design and engineering work was completed. A master plan for Cully Park was completed in 2008—just in time for the Great Recession to impact the City’s revenues, forcing it to reduce budgets across all departments and delaying further work.

Joseph Richards, PE, CWRE  Nate Robinson, PE  Steve Roelof, RLA

Continued on page 8>>
Above: Construction is wrapping up as Cully Park prepares to open on June 30. Photo courtesy of Naim Hasan Photography. Below: The park master plan, developed in 2008 by Vigil-Agrimis, Inc. who later merged with ESA, shows the park layout and its relationship to the neighborhood.
Support for the park was strong in the Cully neighborhood, a low-income community that is predominantly Latino and had long been underserved with parks and recreation opportunities. Verde, at the time known as “Hacienda Community Development Corporation,” formed the grassroots group Let Us Build Cully Park, that was able to work with the City to create a unique public-private partnership in which Verde would develop the park and the City and the nonprofit would collaborate to raise the $11.3 million construction budget.

Verde also revisited the park master plan. The original plan—which emphasized sports fields—was changed through an inclusive community visioning process to include new features like facilities for after-school programs and a Native American Gathering Garden. Student groups researched park and playground designs and presented their own ideas at community design charrettes. The Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) also informed the design of the gathering garden and took responsibility for helping with planting and maintenance—in exchange for obtaining permission from Portland Parks to harvest plant materials, something that is ordinarily not permitted at city parks.

As the overall plan for the park took shape, the ESA team was challenged to create an inviting design for landscaping, buildings, utilities, and stormwater systems while avoiding toxic leaks of landfill gas that could otherwise harm park users, especially children. A variety of tactics were taken to mitigate the environmental hazards of the landfill, including installing a cap, which is an impermeable liner that contains gases and chemicals from escaping the soils below.

The impermeable cap, however, raised its own set of major challenges for stormwater management in a region that averages 37 inches of rain a year. We developed drainage systems that used traditional pipes to discharge water to the edge of the site, where the team built a perimeter conveyance system. Drywells were constructed outside of the landfill area to allow safe infiltration. In addition, a network of perforated pipes had to be installed under fields to allow them to drain.

Even the plant selection endured special consideration because of the cap. Trees were carefully selected so that their root structure wouldn't risk penetration. While not all native, the species were approved by Portland Urban Forestry and the state Department of Environmental Quality.

As the planning, landfill mitigation, design, and construction process comes to a long-awaited close, we are reminded that the completion of this park marks a new beginning for residents in the Cully Park neighborhood. If you would like to learn more about this project, contact Joe Richards, Nate Robinson, or Steve Roelof.

When it opens on June 30, Cully Park will feature community gardens and sports fields, fitness courses, play areas and picnic areas, an off-leash dog park, a native prairie habitat restoration area, and a Native American Gathering Garden.
Working Toward Climate Justice in the Gateway Cities

Jeff Caton, PE, LEED AP  Heidi Rous, CPP

As with any environmental stressor, the impacts of climate change will not affect everyone equally. Across the spectrum of climate hazards—from flooding and extreme weather events, to deteriorated air quality, to severe droughts—the impacts of climate change will fall hardest on those who are historically over-burdened and most susceptible, including the elderly, infants and children; people and communities of color; and people living in poverty.

The environmental justice movement—which seeks the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work for all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income—traces its origin to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Over the last decade, the Environmental Justice movement has increased its response to the need for protecting those most vulnerable to climate change, and for sharing the costs and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly. ESA’s sustainability and air quality analysts have been at the forefront of developing Climate Action Plans (CAPs), Health Risk Assessments, Health Impact Assessments, and other environmental planning documents to help cities create healthier communities for all (see “A Public Health Framework for Mitigating Climate Change” from the September 2017 ESA Connects for more information).
The Gateway Cities region of southern Los Angeles County consists of 27 cities that together have a total population of more than two million. The Gateway Cities region is also home to the Port of Long Beach and major transportation corridors, and adjacent to the Port of Los Angeles and numerous refineries and other heavy industries. As such, this region has long been a focus of environmental justice concerns due to persistent air pollution burdening resident populations. Nearly three-quarters of Gateway Cities’ residents live in census tracts designated by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) as “disadvantaged communities.” These communities tend to have high unemployment, persistent poverty, health sensitivities and/or lack of health care access, and low levels of educational attainment. Such factors make these communities highly sensitive and more vulnerable to climate change exposure.

In addition to existing environmental health issues, the Gateway Cities region is susceptible to the looming effects of climate change, such as higher average temperatures, longer and more severe droughts punctuated by high-precipitation years, heat waves, flooding in low-lying areas from more intense storms, and higher levels of air pollution. These climate change hazards will directly and indirectly impact critical infrastructure, public health, natural systems, and the regional economy. For disadvantaged communities, the burdens are compounded by having fewer resources to prepare for or recover from the impacts of climate change.

Fortunately, many of the actions that local governments can take to address climate change can bring multiple health and equity co-benefits to Gateway Cities’ residents, while addressing the region’s persistent inequities. For example, reducing the miles driven by passenger cars by providing safe and accessible walking and bicycling infrastructure can increase physical activity, reduce air pollution, and lower injury collisions. These health co-benefits can produce an array of cascading benefits, including reducing chronic disease, lowering obesity levels, reducing respiratory diseases, and improving mental health.

ESA, along with the Institute for Local Government, is currently leading a project to develop a Climate Action Plan Framework (CAP Framework) for the Gateway Cities Council of Governments (COG) that addresses climate justice concerns head on. Through the CAP Framework, member jurisdictions will be provided tools, templates, and guidance to integrate public health and equity into long-range climate action planning that reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and increases the climate resiliency of vulnerable local communities.

The COG recognizes it has an important role, in partnership with its member cities and community-based organizations, to educate and engage the public on climate change issues, and to promote community involvement in actions to reduce climate change risks, particularly among disadvantaged populations. The CAP Framework will help the COG’s member cities “connect the dots” between climate protection and local benefits to health, equity, economic development, and community resilience.

The CAP Framework’s tools and guidance are allowing the cities to identify and prioritize local measures that reduce GHG emissions and improve resilience while aligning with local planning priorities. Resources allow member cities to identify specific communities and demographics that are particularly vulnerable to climate change hazards and to integrate equity as a key planning principle. In developing the CAP Framework, we are addressing the following series of questions to evaluate potential benefits and burdens related to measure implementation and how they relate to known social and racial disparities:

- How can implementation of local climate change programs and measures be more effectively tracked to measure equity outcomes, based on available data?
- How can implementation costs and benefits be mapped to race, income, and/or disadvantaged community indicators?
- How can local climate change programs and investments be more effectively targeted to disadvantaged communities?
- How would new jobs or economic opportunities related to local implementation be equitably distributed, and could the outcomes be measured?

This innovative approach will help educate and engage the public on climate change issues, build political support, and promote community involvement in actions to reduce emissions and build resiliency to climate change. It also positions the Gateway Cities to receive more in-state funding to implement local GHG reduction and climate change adaptation programs, because a large portion of the funds collected by the state Cap and Trade program are earmarked to benefit disadvantaged communities.

In this way, at least, a region that has long borne the brunt of industrial pollution may end up getting its fair share of benefits from statewide efforts to mitigate and prepare for climate change. To find out more about our ongoing work with community leaders and planners to create toolsets and plans for successful environmental justice initiatives, please email the Gateway Cities COG’s community resilience manager, Heidi Rous.

According to the USEPA:
Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.
While not making the headlines or evening news reports, recent changes stemming from White House Executive Orders are making a significant impact to the environmental review process nationwide. Here is a summary of the changes and what they mean to you.

On August 24, 2017, President Trump published Executive Order 13807: Establishing Discipline and Accountability in the Environmental Review and Permitting Process for Infrastructure Projects. The intent of the order, as summed up in the Secretary of the Interior Order Number 3355: Streamlining NEPA Reviews and Implementation of Executive Order 13807, is to: “1) focus on issues that truly matter rather than amassing unnecessary detail; 2) reduce paperwork, including by setting appropriate page limits; 3) discuss briefly issues that are not significant; and 4) prepare analytic (rather than encyclopedic) documents, among other measures.”

These orders tasked the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ), which oversees NEPA, to create a list of actions aimed at reducing the average time for environmental review and approval. They also limit the number of pages of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to 150 pages, with an allowance of up to 300 pages for “complex” projects, as well as a completion date within 365 days. Essentially, this means that ESA must conduct its same thorough analysis, but synthesize it in a much tighter format.

ESA has already successfully submitted reports that comply with these orders, delivering thorough documentation and information regarding environmental impacts to the public and decision makers, at an appropriate level of detail while also adhering to page limits:

- In April, ESA successfully delivered under the 300-page bar on the Draft EIR/EIS for the North Bay Water Reuse Program Phase 2, involving 20 EIR-level analyses and coordination with a dozen agencies. According to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation staff, this is the first page-limited EIS in the Bureau’s West Region, if not Bureau-wide.
- In June, ESA worked with the Bureau of Land Management to provide a 20-page Environmental Assessment for the PG&E Strength Testing and In-Line Inspection Project, which was among the first “abridged EAs” to be approved.

To learn more about our process, and how we can help navigate these changes effectively for your upcoming project, connect with Dave Davis or Cristina Gispert.
### June

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<tr>
<td>17-21</td>
<td>Association of Floodplain Managers Annual Conference</td>
<td>Phoenix, AZ</td>
<td>Jessica Ludy: The Case for Tolerable Risk Guidelines to Manage Flood Risk</td>
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<td>Alex Trahan: Relating Future-Conditions Coastal Flood Hazards to Existing-Conditions FEMA Maps</td>
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<td>24-27</td>
<td>Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Western District Annual Meeting</td>
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<td>9-13</td>
<td>Esri User Conference</td>
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<td>GIS - Inspiring What's Next</td>
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<td>13-19</td>
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<td>15-18</td>
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<td>17-20</td>
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<td>Marco Island, FL</td>
<td>Doug Robison: Implementing Gulf Restoration in Florida, Panelist</td>
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<td>Dave Tomasko: Implementing Florida’s Numeric Nutrient Criteria, Panelist</td>
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<td>Julie Sullivan: Emerging Issues in Environmental Resource Permitting, Panelist</td>
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<td>California Resource Recovery Association (CRRA): Sea Change</td>
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### August

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<td>Florida Local Environmental Resource Agencies (FLERA) 2018 Annual Conference</td>
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<td>Jessica Ludy: The Case for Tolerable Risk Guidelines to Manage Flood Risk</td>
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<td>Alex Trahan: Relating Future-Conditions Coastal Flood Hazards to Existing-Conditions FEMA Maps</td>
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<td>American Water Resources Association (AWRA) Florida Annual Meeting</td>
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<td>Ecological Society of America Annual Meeting</td>
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<td>20-23</td>
<td>Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Minneapolis 18 Annual Meeting and Exhibit</td>
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<td>Tom Ries: An Assessment of Living Shorelines/Natural Infrastructure Solutions – Toward Improving Ecosystem Resiliency</td>
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<td>Chris Warn: Gulf Coast Restoration Challenges and Opportunities</td>
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<td>Doug Robison: Overview of the RESTORE Act State Expenditure Plan for the State of Florida</td>
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<td>Dave Tomasko: Ecosystem Restoration via Reestablishing Historical Tidal Patterns</td>
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<td>Diane Rosensweig: Cortez Commercial Fishing Village uses Grassroots Efforts to Fund Large-Scale Habitat Restoration</td>
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<td>27-29</td>
<td>California Climate Change Adaptation Forum 2018</td>
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<td>28-31</td>
<td>Florida Lake Management Society (FLMS) 29th Annual Technical Symposium</td>
<td>Fort Lauderdale, FL</td>
<td>Emily Keenan: Science before Projects: Decision-Tree Support Tool to Drive Lake Management</td>
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<td>Dave Tomasko: Monitoring the response of Sunshine Lake to implementation of identified projects in the water quality management plan: Did it work?</td>
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New Faces

ESA continues to strategically add expertise and resources to better meet our clients’ needs. Join us in welcoming the latest additions to our growing team!

Exciting opportunities available: esassoc.com/careers

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ESA is a leading environmental planning and design firm committed to the principles of sustainability. We specialize in environmental and community planning, ecosystem restoration design, technical studies and investigations, environmental impact assessment and documentation, and environmental compliance.

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