

Biden Administration Initiates Ocean Justice Strategy

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On June 8, 2023, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), on behalf of the [Ocean Policy Committee](#) (OPC), announced the development of a new “Ocean Justice Strategy.” This federal government-wide initiative marks the latest in a long series of Biden administration efforts to promote environmental justice (EJ). The first step is a [request for public input](#) through July 24, 2023.

Overview

- Per CEQ, the Ocean Justice Strategy aims to identify barriers and opportunities to incorporate environmental justice principles into the federal government’s ocean-related activities. It will encompass all recent Biden administration Executive Orders and policies relating to environmental justice, including the [Ocean Climate Action Plan](#). The Strategy will serve as a guide to the federal government’s objectives for guiding “ocean justice” activities. It will propose “equitable and just practices to advance safety, health, and prosperity for communities residing near the ocean, the coasts, and the Great Lakes.”
- The OPC, a Congressionally-created office dedicated to developing federal ocean policy, will draft the Ocean Justice Strategy with input from stakeholders, including Tribes, state and local governments, the private sector, and the public.
- The Biden Administration previewed its support for ocean justice last year when it [announced a commitment](#) to extending environmental justice efforts to coastal and marine contexts. NOAA Fisheries followed suit by releasing its first-ever [Equity and Environmental Justice Strategy](#), which puts equity and environmental justice at the forefront of their effort to steward the nation's ocean resources and habitats.

- The Strategy and its underlying EJ-based principles could lead to future policy changes, including for industries such as offshore energy, real estate, shipping, ports, and fisheries. This new effort is somewhat unique among EJ initiatives in that it targets activities that inherently occur along the nation's coasts or far away from communities. The Strategy could emerge in a variety of directions, from identifying favored or disfavored ocean-based activities to layering additional processes for certain types of proposed projects.

Request for Public Input

OPC seeks public input on the following topics to develop the Ocean Justice Policy:

- Definitions (namely, what is “ocean justice”)
- Barriers to ocean justice
- Opportunities for ocean justice
- Research and knowledge gaps
- Tools and practices (e.g., how to use existing tools such as CEJST, EJScreen, and EnviroAtla, in addition to developing new tools)
- Partnerships and collaboration with external stakeholders
- Any additional considerations

In addition to these comments, OPC will consider comments submitted in response to its previous [request for information](#) on the Ocean Climate Action Plan to inform the development of the Ocean Justice Strategy.

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