

Takeaways from the Special Meeting on Potential HEAL Amendments

Overview

This is a high-level summary of the takeaways from the Environmental Justice (EJ) Council Special meeting on June 23, 2026. Watch the [recording](#) to listen to their statements (Spanish and ASL recordings available). Comments begin at 00:38:10. This meeting and summary do not constitute Government-to-Government Tribal Consultation and are only initial thoughts from those who could attend.

Background

Questions or comments at the special meeting regarding the EJ Council's engagement methods and roles in potential amendment of HEAL (e.g., this is not enough time, what are the concerns and risks in opening HEAL, etc.) were clarified as follows: The EJ Council initiated this special meeting in response to an invitation to join Representative Reeve's working group to discuss HEAL 2.0 and opening up the HEAL Act in the 2027 legislative session. The goal of the special EJ Council meeting was to determine if the Council will participate, and how. At the special meeting the Council adopted a motion directing staff and the Council to participate in discussions on HEAL Act amendments to provide background on successes and challenges of HEAL implementation as well as ideas to address concerns as they see it. The motion also directs staff to work with Representative Reeves to meaningfully engage Tribes and frontline communities and emphasized that "Council and staff input on HEAL Act amendments should not be attributed as endorsement by the EJC and only reflect that staff person's expertise and experience. The EJC will decide later whether to endorse any legislation that results from this process."

What We Heard from Tribes

One Tribal Leader and One Tribal Staff from two Tribal Nations provided statements at the Special Meeting.

- Consider engaging with Tribes in Government-to-Government Consultation.
- Concerned about past proposals to fold the Forest Practices Board underneath the HEAL Act. Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission also expressed concerns in a letter last Fall.
- Doesn't quite understand what the goal of the process to amend the HEAL Act is.
- Aware that there were some concerns about the rules from the Forest and Fish Agreement that all the caucuses agreed on, and one decided not to fulfill their commitment and agreement to the process. The EJ Council needs to be educated on those processes and why they were set up the way they were and the importance of the consensus process and honoring the agreements that all the caucuses had with the Adaptive Management Program.
- The notice for this meeting didn't provide adequate time to work with Tribal Council and the Northwest Indian Fish Commission staff and the other Tribes that are fluent on this process and also understand the original intent of the HEAL Act. Tribes need more time to work with their natural resources staff, as well as the Northwest Indian Fish Commission. They said that they hope that announcements for future meetings provide more time to attend in an adequate way. They also requested that any notices be sent to the Northwest Indian Fish Commission as they often rely on Commission staff to see who will be attending and to receive technical assistance so they can be better prepared for these meetings.

- Expressed concerns if there is a back door approach that may be occurring to balance economic impacts vs environmental impacts to his community and other communities that depend on clean water to survive.
- The EJ Council needs to understand what Tribal Consultation truly means – it is a collaboration as much as a consultation. There are Treaty Tribes with legal standing when it comes to environmental protection of resources and other Tribes that need these resources to be protected based on their own aboriginal rights.

What We Heard from Community

Two Community Organizations provided statements at the Special Meeting.

- The organization offered to be a thought partner. They have anticipated that there would be efforts to amend HEAL and have convened community partners so they can approach the work with a community-centered lens. They would like to work to improve HEAL in a collaborative way. They are interested in working out some of the kinks they've seen over the last few years.
- African Americans are an overburdened community that remains underrepresented on this Council and other Councils. Asked how the organization can support the outreach to communities that are not represented on the Council. The organization is a massive civil rights organization that champions environmental and climate justice issues, and they could help to support the Council and the HEAL Act.

Council Member Comments and Discussion

- If we are looking at the potential expansion of HEAL and the agencies that are included, we need to consider if those agencies would have the necessary funding in this next session.

- Continue to have questions about the HEAL 2.0 partnership meetings including what the meetings are, what the goals of the meetings are, who is facilitating, what Representative Reeve's role is, and who is at the table. More transparency is needed.
- The Council has a responsibility to be in solidarity with Tribes and communities, and we need more dialogue with environmental justice communities. I have no doubt or hesitation in participating in a process that the Council didn't initiate--we need to be careful not to marginalize the Council. It is too weak to only **encourage** early and often engagement with Tribes and communities. This is a test of co-governance, and the engagement needs to be meaningful.
- This would be a great opportunity if we were not dictated by a preset timeline. There is a need to learn more about how Tribes and communities feel the impacts of HEAL have been and to really assess and evaluate in a forward looking way, rather than being pushed into a reactive place. Encourage looking at the impacts of HEAL and having a shared voice to uplift and safeguard what is working well in a coordinated way.
- Recommend that the Council engages. The first time around, Tribes were not included. We have heard from Representative Reeves that they want to engage Tribes early and often. There are some things about HEAL that can be improved and encourage looking at it, section by section. This is an opportunity to ensure funding can be used in the best way and keep the purpose of HEAL moving forward, despite the budget constraints. It's better to be partially in the driver's seat than just on the menu.
- The work is important and we need to be at the table. Members took an oath to represent their communities. We need more information about where Representative Reeves sees this going. They also said we need to bring more people to the table--she needs to hear more from her community.
- Participating in a process is not an endorsement of whatever comes out of the process. Endorsement would be a separate step. Participating and sharing the

successes and challenges is a valuable exercise. Legislators do not have a lot of staff, and this is actually relatively early for legislative engagement. Representative Reeves has been trying to show up and engage and is open to bringing more people to the table.

- Support taking advantage of the opportunity for the Council to bring its voice. The Council should take advantage of making our demands. Would rather have more time to go to the community to get some more thoughts so we can inform the legislation properly. Applauds Representative Reeves and is eager for more information.
- Have legitimate concerns, including how HEAL funding has shifted to the CCA. Concerns about the current knowledge of the Legislature on environmental justice and HEAL and motivations for CCA spending in a budget crisis. Concerns about the conditions and risks of opening up HEAL and what could go in our favor and could not go in our favor. Hearing that the Council is moving in the direction of wanting to engage in the workgroup and to ask for an evaluation. What could it look like to increase education among legislators? Once session starts our access will decrease and with less access we will have less influence.

Additional Feedback and Questions

The Council also received informal feedback and questions during the special meeting. These comments were shared without name or affiliation to a particular Tribe or Community.

- A few days' notice is not enough time to get the right people in the room, especially when the notice is sent just before a three-day weekend.
- Has the EJC seriously considered the risks that opening the HEAL Act to amendments could pose? Is this the right time to subject HEAL to heightened scrutiny from opponents of the Act?

- Has Representative Reeves provided a rationale for potentially moving the EJC to the Office of Equity? Is there confusion at the legislative level about the distinction between equity and environmental justice? Perhaps an Office of Environmental Justice would be a better fit, especially if HEAL implementation could support that approach.
- Let's continue modernizing implementation mechanisms. For example, if I were drafting a HEAL modernization package in 2027, I would add the following statutory principle: "Environmental Justice includes equitable access to healthy housing, healthy materials, community-owned infrastructure, circular economy participation, regenerative economic development, and the fair distribution of environmental, economic, and public health benefits." This addition would connect environmental justice, healthy buildings, industrial symbiosis, workforce development, circular manufacturing, and climate resilience into one integrated framework that reflects where Washington's environmental and economic policies are already heading.

Possible amendments:

- Add a Community Benefit Creation requirement
 - Expand Environmental Justice Assessments to include procurement
 - Recognize healthy buildings as Environmental Justice infrastructure
 - Add circular economy metrics
 - Create a HEAL Community Infrastructure category
 - Require Environmental Justice return-on-investment tracking
 - Create a Regenerative Development designation
 - Strengthen capacity funding for community organizations
- Will the proposal increase, decrease, or maintain investments in overburdened communities?
- I think all state agencies whose actions affect vulnerable and overburdened communities should be required to comply with HEAL. I also think counties should be

required—not just encouraged—to opt into HEAL. Under no circumstances should the Act be weakened through amendments. It should be expanded.

- The webinar format makes it so that you cannot see the participant list. It's constraining to participate in this format.

Tribal & Community Requested Actions for the EJ Council & State Partners to Consider

Below is a list of actions for the EJ Council and State Partners to consider based on the feedback the Council received during the Special Meeting.

- Seek clarity from Representative Reeves on their intent and goals of amending the HEAL Act.
- Meet with Tribal partners like the Northwest Indian Fish Commission to understand Forest and Fish Agreement, Adaptive Management Program to ensure EJ Council's actions are in alignment with and honor other state agreements.
- Pilot and adopt a government-to-government policy in collaboration with Tribes.
- Follow up with Tribes to consider a policy position that would enable the EJ Council to amplify Tribal concerns associated with folding the Forest Practices Board underneath HEAL.
- Understand the difference between Treaty and Executive Order Tribes
- Work with the community-based organizations in educating communities about the HEAL Act, gathering community input, and ensuring agency actions reflect the priorities of those most impacted by environmental injustices.