

Adopted Minutes of the Environmental Justice Council

June 23, 2026

Virtual ZOOM Platform

Due to limited staff capacity, Environmental Justice Council (Council) staff are working to streamline the Council meeting notes. The notes now include only very high-level points and the final decisions made along with voting records. The full meeting recordings can be found on the Council's website: [Environmental Justice Council Meetings | WaPortal.org](https://www.waportal.org/EnvironmentalJusticeCouncilMeetings). However, it is important that meeting notes are useful to the Council Members and the public. Please share feedback with Council staff on how we can make these notes most useful to you by emailing envjustice@ejc.wa.gov or by calling 360-584-4398.

Council Members present:

- Tatiana Brown (Co-Chair)
- The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Co-Chair), joined at 1:55pm.
- Cristina González Torres
- David Mendoza
- Esther Min
- Todd Mitchell, joined at 2:00pm
- Faaluaina Pritchard
- Running-Grass

Council Members absent:

- Nichole Banegas
- The Honorable JJ Wilbur

Agency Ex Officio Liaisons present:

- Jennifer Grove, Department of Commerce present
- Lauren Jenks, Department of Health present
- Nicole Johnson, Department of Agriculture present
- Olgy Diaz, Department of Natural Resources present
- Emilie Litsinger, Puget Sound Partnership present
- Ahmer Nizam, Department of Transportation present
- Courtney Cecale, Department of Ecology present

Council staff:

- Jonathan Chen
- Angie Ellis
- Christy Curwick Hoff
- Sierra Red Bow
- Sierra Rotakhina

I. Welcome and Roll Call for Quorum

Tatiana Brown, Council Co-Chair, called the meeting to order. Co-Chair Brown explained that this special meeting was called to share information about efforts by lawmakers to amend the HEAL Act and to receive any comments from Tribal nations, communities, and the public about whether and how the Environmental Justice (EJ) Council should engage. She shared that Maria Batayola, former Council Co-Chair, has stepped down from the Council. Co-Chair Brown thanked Maria for her service.

Christy Curwick Hoff, Council Staff, facilitated roll call. At the time of the initial roll call, there were 6 voting members present, meeting quorum (see table).

10 Members / 6 Vacancies / 0 Leaves of Absence / Current Quorum = 6		
The Honorable JJ Wilbur	Tribal Representative	Absent
Running-Grass	EJ Practitioner	Present
Faaluaina Pritchard	Community Representative	Present
Todd Mitchell	Union Representative	Absent
Esther Min	EJ Practitioner	Present
David Mendoza	Representative At Large	Present
Cristina González Torres	Community Representative	Present
The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Co-Chair)	Tribal Representative	Absent
Tatiana Brown (Co-Chair)	Community Representative	Present
Nichole Banegas	Business Representative	Absent
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant

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Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant

II. Approval of Agenda by Council

Cristina González Torres, Council Member, facilitated adoption of the agenda.

Motion: The Council adopts the agenda.

Motion/Second: Lua Pritchard/David Mendoza. No objections noted. **The Motion passed.**

III. Approval of January 29 and April 10, 2026 Meeting Notes by Council

The Council did not take action on this item.

IV. Briefing: Efforts to Amend the HEAL Act

Member González Torres, introduced the agenda item. Christy Hoff and Sierra Rotakhina, Council Manager, shared general information on how laws, like the HEAL Act, could be amended during legislative session and what they knew about efforts to date by legislators to amend the HEAL Act. David Mendoza, Council Member, said Representative Reeves indicated she was asked by budget leadership to make amendments to HEAL. The House had proposed drastic cuts to HEAL implementation last session. It took a lot of advocacy to ensure HEAL implementation funding was not cut in the final adopted budget. Many of the HEAL implementation staff in agencies are funded with CCA revenue and that revenue is expected to be cut in half. He added that legislators, particularly those more newly elected, may not understand the HEAL Act and there is a need to share what it takes for effective HEAL implementation. Co-Chair Brown said today the Council would be starting the conversation with community and Tribes to discuss whether the

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Council should engage in conversations about possible amendments to HEAL. She stressed that it will not be the last opportunity.

V. Tribal Nation Guidance

The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson, Council Co-Chair, opened up the agenda item.

Amy Trainer, Swinomish Indian Tribal Communities Director of Environmental Policy, asked the EJ Council to consider the opportunity to engage in Government-to-Government consultation. She referred to the past proposal to include the Forest Practices Board in the HEAL Act, saying she had concerns with that approach. She said she believed that the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission also expressed concerns in a letter last fall. If that becomes a consideration moving forward, it would be a concern for her and she would want to check with Council Senator JJ Wilbur. Adding that as staff, she would be concerned.

Jim Peters, Squaxin Island Tribal Secretary, said he has 45 years of experience in natural resources co-management with the state of Washington. He said he was one of the original Department of Fish and Wildlife negotiators and Forest and Fish negotiators that is still working on these issues. He said he heard about the meeting from the Northwest Indian Fish Commission. He said he doesn't quite understand what the goal of the process is to amend the HEAL act. He said he knows there was 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. He said 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. He said this has not been adequate time, adding that he hasn't had time to work with his 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. He said they are concerned if there is a back

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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. He said 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. He said that's all he wanted to share at this point, until he gets a better understanding of the justification for opening up the HEAL Act. He said he needs more time to work with his Tribe and their natural resources staff, as well as they Northwest Indian Fish Commission. He said that he hopes that announcements for future meetings provide more time to attend in an adequate way. He 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 he can be better prepared for these meetings.

Co-Chair Brown said the EJ Council is convening this meeting to hear from Tribal partners and community members, adding that the EJ Council is not initiating the effort to amend the HEAL Act. She said the EJ Council has been invited to engage in the effort by Representative Reeves. The EJ Council is holding this meeting to keep communities and Tribes informed and to collect input on if and how the EJ Council should participate in the process that Representative Reeves has set up.

VI. Community Guidance

Member Mendoza said the Council is not seeking feedback on any amendments, emphasizing that they are not aware of any proposals for amendments at this time. He clarified that they're looking for feedback on whether the EJ Council should even be considering engaging in the efforts to amend HEAL.

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Maiko Patschke, Environmental Justice Policy Lead at Front and Centered, offered Front and Centered 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. She said they're interested in working out some of the kinks they've seen over the last few years.

Jonathan Jones Thomas, Environmental and Climate Justice Chairman of the NAACP for the State of Washington, Oregon, and Alaska. He said African Americans are an overburdened community that remains underrepresented on this Council and other Councils. He asked how he and the NAACP can support the outreach to communities that are not represented on the Council. He said the NAACP is a massive civil rights organization that champions environmental and climate justice issues. He said they could help to support the Council and the HEAL Act.

VII. Public Comment

Member Mendoza opened up the public comment period

Sierra Red Bow, Council Staff, read the public comment that was submitted in writing (see below for a summary of the comments)

Martha Foster Lucas, Executive Director of the Washington State Coalition of African Community Leaders, said African diaspora seniors, youth, and family members that live in King, Snohomish, and Pierce Counties with Environmental Health Disparities map scores of 7 or higher are directly benefiting for the first time from HEAL funding. The CCA was set up to provide the resources to support communities overburdened by pollution and climate change. They asked decision makers continue to keep their promise to the communities they serve.

VIII. Council Member Discussion and Possible Action: Efforts to Amend the HEAL Act

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Co-Chair Brown asked each voting member to share their thoughts on this issue. She said they have not yet decided whether the Council should be engaging in efforts to open up the HEAL Act. The Council has been offered an opportunity to engage in the working group that Representative Reeves is convening. She asked each member to share their thoughts on whether the Council should engage in Representative Reeve's process and if so, what that engagement could look like.

- Todd Mitchell, Council Member, said that 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. We don't want to ask for something from an agency that is downsizing capacity.
- Running-Grass, Council Member, said he has a lot of questions, including what the meetings are, who is facilitating, what Representative Reeve's role is, and who is at the table. He said more transparency is needed. He asked what the goal of those meetings is. He said we have a responsibility to be in solidarity with Tribes and communities, and we need more dialogue with environmental justice communities. He said he has no doubt or hesitation in participating in a process that they Council didn't initiate, adding that we need to be careful not to marginalize the Council. He said it is too weak to only **encourage** early and often engagement from Tribes and communities. He said this is a test of co-governance, and the engagement needs to be meaningful. He encouraged the Council to be more demanding.
- Esther Min, Council Member, said this would be a great opportunity if we were not dictated by a preset timeline. She commented on the 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. She encouraged looking at the impacts of HEAL and having a shared voice to uplift and safeguard what is working well in a coordinated way.

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- Co-Chair Erickson said he recommends that the Council engages, especially from a Tribal perspective. The first time around, Tribes were not included. He has heard from Representative Reeves that she wants to engage Tribes early and often. He said there are some things about HEAL that can be improved and encouraged looking at it section by section. He stressed that 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. He said he would rather be partially in the driver's seat than just on the menu.
- Member González Torres said she agrees with Co-Chair Erickson and with Member Running-Grass. She said the work is important and we need to be at the table. They took an oath to represent their communities. She said she is looking for more information about where Representative Reeves sees this going. She also said we need to bring more people to the table, adding that to do her job, she needs to hear more from her community.
- Member Mendoza stressed that participating in a process is not an endorsement of whatever comes out of the process. He said that is a separate step. He said he felt that participating and sharing the successes and challenges is a valuable exercise. He said he also wanted to provide a little context about legislators and how they do not have a lot of staff and how 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.
- Lua Pritchard, Council Member, said she wants to support taking advantage of the opportunity for the Council to bring its voice. She said we should take advantage of making our demands. She added that she would rather have more time to go to the community to get some more thoughts so we can inform the legislation properly. She said she applauds Representative Reeves and she is eager for more information.
- Co-Chair Brown said she has some legitimate concerns, including how HEAL funding has shifted to the CCA. She said she questioned the current knowledge of the Legislature on

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environmental justice and HEAL and motivations for CCA spending in a budget crisis. She questioned the conditions and risks of opening up HEAL that could go in our favor and could not go in our favor. She said she is hearing that the Council is moving in the direction of wanting to engage in the workgroup and to ask for an evaluation. She asked what it could look like to increase education among legislators. She said once session starts our access will decrease and with less access we will have less influence.

Member Mendoza shared draft language for a possible motion. Co-Chair Brown asked if we want to hold off on engaging until Tribes and communities have been more meaningfully engaged. Co-Chair Erickson said we should continue to engage because this is our opportunity. He discouraged waiting and waiting and then rushing into a decision. Member González Torres said she agrees with Co-Chair Erickson, adding that she is concerned about making final decisions without more people at the table. Member Running-Grass said he wants to make sure that we are in significant solidarity with Tribes and communities and that Representative Reeves understands this. He said it is more than just asking for inclusion. He said our endorsement of conclusions of this group will not be in our control and that we need to work from the inside to make it as impactful as possible. Member Pritchard concurred.

Motion: EJC directs 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. We also direct staff to work with Rep. Reeves to meaningfully engage Tribes and frontline communities. EJC staff do not speak for the Council on any positions not adopted by the full 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.

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Motion/Second: Member Mendoza/Member Mitchell

Motion Passed

A: Yes, I approve.

B: Yes, with reservations.

C: Not voting until we have further discussions.

D: I don't approve, but I won't block.

E: I block, have serious concerns.

F: I stand aside, recuse myself.

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The Honorable JJ Wilbur	Tribal Representative	Absent
Running-Grass	EJ Practitioner	B
Faaluaina Pritchard	Community Representative	A
Todd Mitchell	Union Representative	A
Esther Min	EJ Practitioner	A
David Mendoza	Representative At Large	A
Cristina González Torres	Community Representative	A
The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson (Co-Chair)	Tribal Representative	A
Tatiana Brown (Co-Chair)	Community Representative	B
Nichole Banegas	Business Representative	Absent
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Community Representative	Vacant
Vacant	Tribal Representative	Vacant
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IX. Appreciation and Adjournment

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Co-Chair Brown asked folks to continue to share thoughts on others who should engage. She encouraged everyone to contact Representative Reeves and advocate for their own ability to be at the table. She said this would be a priority for the Council next session.