



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Environmental Justice & Local Coastal Programs

If you need assistance with this document in Spanish, please contact the Environmental Justice Unit at [EnvironmentalJustice@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:EnvironmentalJustice@coastal.ca.gov).

Si necesita asistencia en español con este documento, comuníquese con la Unidad de Justicia Ambiental en [EnvironmentalJustice@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:EnvironmentalJustice@coastal.ca.gov)

### **What is the California Coastal Commission?**

The Coastal Commission was created by a citizen initiative passed by the voters in 1972. Californians were so concerned about pollution, habitat destruction and loss of public access along the coast that they passed a law to protect it. The Commission is a state agency charged with preserving and protecting California's coast and ocean and does this by regulating new development along 1,271 miles of coastline. We have monthly meetings where our 12-voting member board of Commissioners make decisions on development proposals and local planning documents (LCPs) that are evaluated by our staff.

### **Why is environmental justice important to the Commission?**

For more than 40 years, the Coastal Commission has worked to uphold the principles of the Coastal Act, a statute grounded in public inclusion and equity. Yet despite numerous victories, the statute's vision of coastal protection and access for all people has not been fully realized. Generations of injustices towards California's Native American communities, people of color and other historically marginalized populations through forms of discriminatory land use policies, desecration of sacred lands and cultural resources, and concentration of environmental pollution, has resulted in inequitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens that still disproportionately burden these communities today.

Because government played a key part in creating and continuing to perpetuate these historic harms, government can and should help to unwind them. The passage of AB 2616 (Burke) in 2016 amended the Coastal Act giving the California Coastal Commission the explicit authority to consider environmental justice in permitting and planning decisions and requires the governor to appoint an environmental justice Commissioner. In 2019, the Commission adopted its [environmental justice policy](#) to integrate the principles of environmental justice and social equity throughout its program. By adopting and implementing an environmental justice policy, the California Coastal Commission is demonstrating its commitment to diversity and protecting coastal natural resources for the benefit of all Californians regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or place of residence.

### **What are Local Coastal Programs (LCPs)?**

Local government partners in coastal cities and counties play an important role in protecting the California coast with the Commission. Local governments are required to develop Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) with the Commission, which carry out policies of the California Coastal Act at the local level and must be approved by the Commission. Once a community has an approved LCP, the local government can issue most Coastal Development Permits, although proposed development can still be appealed to the Commission. The Commission must also approve any amendments or updates to the LCPs.

### **What to expect from future guidance the Commission is preparing?**

The Commission committed in its environmental justice policy and [2021-2025 Strategic Plan](#) to provide guidance for local governments on how to apply the principles of the environmental justice policy to LCPs. The guidance will provide information on how changes in the Coastal Act and adoption of the Commission's environmental justice policy intersect with LCPs and how local governments can further the principles of environmental justice and social equity in their LCPs.