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**New York Defines Disadvantaged Communities**

March 27, 2023

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In March 2023, the Climate Justice Working Group finished its work to define Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) for the purposes of implementing the NYS Climate Scoping Plan. You can find the maps of the DACs here.

New York State is undertaking the most ambitious effort in the U.S. to meet the challenge of climate change. Importantly, New York’s Climate Act recognizes that climate change doesn’t affect all communities equally.

New York’s Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act (CLCPA) sets some of the most ambitious carbon reduction and clean energy goals in the nation. These include getting to 70% renewables by 2030, 9,000 megawatts of offshore wind by 2035, and a zero-emission electric sector by 2040. In fact, New York’s climate action strategies are stimulating a modern clean energy revolution and setting challenging standards for all states that choose to be part of the new green economy. An important factor in this plan are mandates created to ensure that communities – disadvantaged, frontline, most impacted – receive a fair share of the investments made to fight the climate crisis.

To address this imperative, the CLCPA included the requirement that 35-40% of all investments made under the law go to disadvantaged communities (DACs). To create accuracy and accountability, the law created the 13-member Climate Justice Working Group (CJWG) as the body authorized to develop the definition of a DAC. Working with experienced consultants, state agency staff from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and NYSERDA, and the 13 members of the working group, representing environmental justice organizations and frontline communities across the state, studied various data for federal census tracts, focusing on existing environmental burdens, climate change risks, community level health vulnerabilities, and population characteristics, including race, to develop its proposed scoring mechanism.

It took well over a year for the working group to arrive at its definition. They evaluated nearly 150 different categories and struggled to develop a system for defining DACs that included both urban and rural communities. A 120-day public comment period on their draft definition opened in March 2022 and was extended to August. Ultimately using 45 relevant indicators, the CJWG identified 1,736 census tracts – a little over a third of all those in the state – that met the new criteria.

In addition to developing the DAC definition, the CLCPA mandates the CJWG to undertake periodic reviews of Scoping Plan investments and monitor compliance with the DAC requirements. Every four years, the required DEC evaluation of CLCPA progress will include required consultations with both the Climate Action Council and the Climate Justice Working Group.

For more information and an interactive map that provides information on DAC-identified census tracts, visit: <https://climate.ny.gov/resources/disadvantaged-communities-criteria/>