

Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

# ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN

2021 - 2025

*draft*

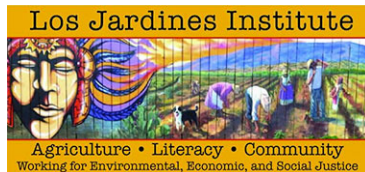




NATIONAL  
**WILDLIFE**  
REFUGE SYSTEM



FRIENDS OF  
VALLE DE ORO  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



draft

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## Table of Contents

- 03 Executive Summary
- 05 Strategic Intent and Process
- 06 Leadership Team
- 07 Goals and Strategies
- 24 Glossary
- 26 Timeline and Acknowledgements

# Executive Summary

The 570-acre Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), designated in 2012, is the first urban wildlife refuge in the Southwest Region for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the first new refuge to be developed from the ground up under the new USFWS Urban Wildlife Conservation Program. It is located on a former dairy farm in Albuquerque's South Valley in a heavily industrial community, populated by a majority of people of color. The community has been a key incubator for the nation's Environmental Justice Movement since the 1980s. The Refuge resulted from the desire and efforts of the community and partnerships that formed around remediating and monitoring the impacts of industrial development and intensive agriculture in the neighborhood.

The Valle de Oro Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan (EEJSP) outlines a strategic path forward for the Refuge to integrate environmental and economic justice into its daily practice as the land is restored for wildlife and developed as an educational and recreational resource for the community.

The plan illustrates a collaborative, intentionally inclusive process, bringing community members and organizations together with government agencies to develop the first Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan for a public land site which matches refuge and Federal goals with the needs and aspirations of the community. The plan development process involved research of the Environmental Justice Movement as well as prior health and environmental studies, outreach, and neighborhood survey canvassing and analysis. After the publication of the 2017-2020 plan, input and feedback from the local community was solicited through engagement meetings and events, and community mailers as well as from a community accountability group.

Our hope is that the process can be a model for other public land sites and government agencies for the development of environmental and economic justice strategic plans. This model will help others serve their public missions and the communities in which they are located to build an invested body of partners, collaborators and future conservation stewards around mutual goals.



Valle de Oro NWR is the first green space developed in the Mountain View Neighborhood, which serves as the host community for the Refuge, and is generally characterized as a disadvantaged neighborhood where industrial businesses are scattered among homes, a school and a community center. The Mountain View Neighborhood has traditionally battled against many environmental injustices including the disproportionate impacts of air and water pollution as well as a lack of green space and health outdoor recreation opportunities.

# Strategic Intent and Processes

The US Department of the Interior (DOI) Environmental Justice Strategic Plan (EJSP) outlines five goals to guide the DOI in pursuit of Environmental Justice (EJ). These goals address heightened sensitivity, public participation, decreasing impacts on EJ communities, grants and technical assistance to aid and empower minority, low-income and tribal populations, and enforcement of Title VI protections (DOI, 2016). The Valle de Oro Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan's first five goals directly align with the DOI EJSP goals. In addition, the Valle de Oro EEJSP includes a 6th goal which recognizes that Valle de Oro serves as a model for integration of Environmental Justice into development and programming for other public land sites.

The goals, strategies and action items presented in this document reflect the results of a community-based research project by the partners with the generous advice and support of our Community Accountability Group (CAG) and residents of the host communities. Four hundred and ninety-one surveys were collected from the different neighborhoods known as Mountain View as well as comments and notes from attendance and presentations at public and community meetings (school, neighborhood association, community center) and Permit Hearings from 2014-2017. From 2020-2021 additional resources have been allocated in furthering the integration of Environmental Justice into actual practice and measures of the refuge and additional input was collected to update the EEJSP for 2021-2025. The EJ Team met two times with the CAG. The first meeting was November 30, 2020 and consisted of an introduction of the EJ Team and the CAG, a summary of the EEJSP and its purpose, and a request for community input. The second meeting on January 20, 2021 was a summary of each of the six Environmental and Economic Justice Goals, Strategies & Action Items.

Valle de Oro is a first-of-its-kind model for urban wildlife refuges nationwide illustrating equitable collaboration between government agencies, and native, indigenous, frontline and sacrifice zone communities. These collaborations are rooted in community-based conservation and natural resource management approaches that serve to address environmental injustices.

By implementing this plan, the partners wish to expand on and formalize the Refuge's goal to adhere to environmental justice principles and to ingrain environmental and economic justice practices in the activities and programs of the Refuge as it is developed and restored. Partners in this project include Valle de Oro NWR, Los Jardines Institute, and Friends of Valle de Oro NWR—defined as the Leadership Team - as well as the Community Accountability Group.

The following goals reflect the commitment of the refuge to the community and the community's dreams, needs, and advocacy. The goals encompass intentional strategies for establishing community-based standards and indicators for development of a community-based EJ Score Card. These aligned efforts aim to enhance and deliver equity in the measure of environmental justice activities. These community-based measures coincide with federal efforts of thoroughly delivering on justice for communities. The refuge remains committed to including the community and community partners in the activities of this plan, and the Environmental Justice Leadership team will play a large role in the completion of the action items identified as needing to be completed by the refuge.

By strategically embarking on efforts to support environmental and economic justice work in its local community, Valle de Oro NWR is uniquely positioned to not only model strong economic and environmental justice efforts locally, but also for public land sites across the nation and to influence federal policy related to public land and environmental justice efforts.



# Leadership Team

## The Refuge

Valle de Oro NWR was established in 2012 and is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Region's first Urban Wildlife Refuge. As an Urban Wildlife Refuge, it serves as an urban oasis for both wildlife and people on a 570-acre former dairy farm a few miles south of Albuquerque, the largest metropolitan area in New Mexico.

## LOS JARDINES INSTITUTE

Los Jardines Institute was founded in 2008 and is located in the South Valley of Albuquerque. The Institute works on issues of environmental, economic and social justice through intergenerational programming and multi-media work. The Institute works to create and strengthen community organizations and leaders in order to grow the movement for improved outcomes in the South Valley and other poor and communities of color.



## THE FRIENDS

The Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (Friends) was formed by members of the Mountain View Neighborhood in 2011, before the refuge was established, and was instrumental in the acquisition of refuge lands. As the non-profit support group for the refuge, the Friends contribute to the realization of the overall vision to restore native wildlife habitat, conduct education and outreach, and develop the refuge as a community resource.

## THE COMMUNITY

Mountain View, and the surrounding neighborhoods in the South Valley, and the Pueblo of Isleta form a close-knit historically agricultural community. After World War II the area became a common location for industrial activity. The community has fought to ensure remediation of the resulting environmental justice issues for decades. Throughout this document we use the term "community" to refer to the host communities of Mountain View Neighborhood, the South Valley, and the Pueblo of Isleta, which are primarily impacted by activities at the refuge.

## THE FEDERAL COMPONENT

As a National Wildlife Refuge, Valle de Oro NWR is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) which is under the purview of the Department of the Interior (DOI). The U.S. Department of the Interior is a multifaceted organization, and one of its responsibilities is the stewardship of 20% of the nation's lands, including national wildlife refuges, national parks and other public lands. The Valle de Oro NWR EEJSP is a step down plan of the U.S. Department of the Interior Environmental Justice Strategic Plan (2016), which was developed as a result of Executive Order 12898.

# ENVIRONMENTAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE GOALS, STRATEGIES, and ACTION ITEMS



## GOAL 1 - INSTITUTIONALIZING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Ensure Valle de Oro NWR staff and partners are knowledgeable about the history of environmental and economic justice including the Principles of Environmental Justice, the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, Governor Richardson's Executive Order 2005-056, President Clinton's Executive Order 12898 and President Biden's Executive Orders 13985 and 13990. Based on this knowledge, staff and partners are able to identify and amend program, policies, and activities under their purview that may have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on native and indigenous peoples, people of color, and low-income communities.

The integration of environmental justice into refuge development, programs, activities and facilities is ultimately the responsibility of refuge staff, alone and in collaboration with partners. Valle de Oro NWR is a premiere model for community-based natural and cultural resource management rooted in equity and directly addressing environmental racism and injustice.

- A. Valle de Oro NWR and its founding members and partners will establish an Environmental and Economic Justice Leadership Team (EJLT). The EJLT will advise and guide the process of integrating EJ into programs, policies and activities of Valle de Oro NWR and the overall implementation of the EEJSP. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Work to establish the EJLT agreements and EJ-related protocols.
  - b. Ensure integration of environmental justice values and principles during implementation of EEJSP activities.
  - c. Develop assessments, including standards and indicators to assess and ensure quality performance of EEJSP activities. The assessment should include EEJSP goals and should form an annual community-based EJ ScoreCard, which should align and inform the federal Justice40 EJ ScoreCard.
  - d. Integrate EJ standards and indicators and related EJ ScoreCard, as able, throughout planning and management documents of the refuge.
  - e. Support the development and delivery of EJ curriculum and corresponding educational modules.
  - f. Establish an EJ-related training required for staff, volunteers, partners, vendors and personnel or contractors working on or directly connected to the refuge.
  - g. Evaluate and advise the organization and administration of the refuge, including personnel practices of staff and contractors in relationship to EJ.



## GOAL 1 - INSTITUTIONALIZING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- h. Release an annual EJ Report at the Environmental Justice Community Day. The Report should include the EJ ScoreCard to educate the host communities on past year activities and prioritize goals for the next year.
- B. The refuge should thoroughly integrate environmental and economic justice throughout the visitor experience. This includes the Visitor Center hosting the first EJ Library and Resource Center which will serve as a demonstration site for collaborative and community-based projects, as well as a hub for information guiding the integration of EJ into the Refuge. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Integrate EJ throughout the design and standards of the Visitor Services facility, programs and planning.
  - b. Host the EJ Library and Resource Center at the Visitor Center to include DOI, FWS, Valle de Oro, Pueblo of Isleta and environmental and economic justice materials for research, recreation and education purposes.
  - c. Prioritize EJ Library and Resource Center activities forwarding the EEJSP goals, in service to the host communities.
  - d. Gather seminal documents and texts of the Environmental Justice Movement. These documents will establish an environmental and economic justice archive to be housed at the EJ Library in both digital and physical formats and will be available for public use.
  - e. Work to establish personnel to support the overall operation and sustainability of the EJ Library and Resource Center.
  - f. Display and incorporate the Executive Orders on EJ, the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing and the Principles of Environmental Justice and other appropriate multicultural materials. These will be displayed in areas such as the staff office area, the EJ Library and Resource Center, multipurpose room, partner offices as well as on Valle de Oro-related websites, and social media profiles.



# ENVIRONMENTAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE GOALS, STRATEGIES, and ACTION ITEMS



## GOAL 2 - HOST COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT OF REFUGE

**Ensure native and indigenous peoples, people of color and low income communities are provided with early and ongoing opportunities to engage in meaningful involvement in refuge decision-making processes.**

Meaningful involvement, public participation, and transparency is essential in the identification of potential EJ issues and entails open, ongoing, two-way communication, both formal and informal, between the refuge and the public, particularly involving the refuge's host community. Regular, interactive communication and information distribution enables all parties to learn about opportunities for involvement and better understand the viewpoints and concerns of everyone impacted or affected by decisions that might have a disproportionate environmental or health impact on the community.

The refuge and partners will build the capacity of host community residents, institutions, and organizations to develop, plan and implement participatory practices to advance their participation in development and management of the Valle de Oro NWR.

- A. The refuge should ensure that the foundational principle of EJ, early and meaningful participation, is adhered to in all refuge programs and projects. Strategies for participation should ensure the host community's work towards being equitable partners at every level of decision making. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Ensure that investments and activities prioritize the host communities of Mountain View, Pueblo of Isleta and the South Valley.
  - b. Ensure strategies build the capacity of host communities to engage at all levels of decision making and become equitable partners in development and management of the refuge.
  - c. Establish EJ protocol for developing and delivering reports on refuge management and planning decisions.
  - d. Establish standards and indicators for the EJ ScoreCard to assess host communities participation in programming and management.
- B. The refuge should develop community-based processes for procurement and budgeting to build capacity of host communities further engage in natural resource management and economic development opportunities. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Develop a community-based procurement strategy to engage the host communities in procurement and increase the number of vendors and contractors from host communities as allowable by federal procurement laws and policies.
  - b. Develop guidelines for a participatory budgeting process for host communities to engage in fiscal related refuge management activities.

## GOAL 2 - HOST COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT OF REFUGE

- C. The refuge should continue to develop diverse multicultural and intergenerational collaborations and leadership in the host communities. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Develop shared values and EJ protocols to help develop equitable multicultural and intergenerational collaborations and leadership.
  - b. Continue to support and align activities with the CAG and other residents, institutions and organizations of the host communities.
  - c. Continue to prioritize investment and support for partnerships building the capacity of host communities to participate in refuge management and programmings.
- D. The refuge should prioritize and invest in localized multilingual outreach, education and marketing efforts, materials and public presentations for the host communities of Mountain View, the Pueblo of Isleta, and South Valley. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Establish EJ protocol for announcements and communications regarding management and programming activities.
  - b. Invest in strategies for equitable outreach and engagement, including translation, door-to-door canvassing and post office mailers.
  - c. Prioritize refuge publicity through community-based, tribal, and alternative, media publications and news outlets, prioritizing those which are publicly owned.
  - d. Establish consistent promotion of refuge activities and opportunities through CAG member newsletters, marquees and information boards.
  - e. Continue its presence at host communities residential, institutional and organizational events and activities.
  - f. Prioritize working with host community's residents, institutions and organizations for all services related to media and publications, such as graphic design, translation and interpretation services.





# ENVIRONMENTAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE GOALS, STRATEGIES, and ACTION ITEMS



## GOAL 3 - ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC HEALTH AND JUSTICE

The refuge should, on its own or in collaboration with partners, identify and support efforts to address environmental and economic impacts as a consequence of refuge decisions that may result in disproportionately high and adverse human health, economic or environmental effects native and indigenous peoples, people of color, and low income communities with a primary focus on the Mountain View Community, Pueblo of Isleta and South Valley.

The intent of this goal is to ensure that the refuge actively collaborates with the community and supports its efforts to achieve environmental justice, including mitigation and monitoring efforts, and assist the community in addressing environmental and economic justice issues whenever possible. This includes integrating traditional, native and indigenous science, research and knowledge and any related indicators and standards for evaluating health and pollution.

- A. The refuge should invest in and support the establishment of a local coalition which includes the EJLT and CAG members to move towards community-driven planning, funding, and implementation of monitoring, mitigation, remediation and restoration activities impacting the host communities. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Establish a local coalition working on environmental health and quality.
  - b. Support the coalition in building the host communities capacity to plan, fund and implement research, monitoring, remediation and restoration projects related to environmental, economic and social health.
  - c. Support the coalition in developing standards and indicators related for the EJ ScoreCard to the environmental, economic, cultural and social determinants of health related to refuge programming and management activities.
  - d. Integrate cultural, spiritual and scientific approaches towards addressing health impacts and mitigation, monitoring and remediation of pollution by host communities, including those rights covered by the American Indian Religious Freedoms Act.
  - e. Continue to attend meetings and public hearings regarding on-going issues and potential permitting of new industry and development that could negatively impact the refuge and the community. And support community residents in effectively participating in these hearings.

## GOAL 3 - ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC HEALTH AND JUSTICE

- B. The refuge should support the local coalition for environmental health and quality to study and monitor health, pollution remediation, and encourage the study of cumulative and disparate impact of pollution on the health, safety and well-being of the host community and the flora and fauna of the refuge. This should include community-based, native and indigenous knowledge, resource and science. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
- Assist in identifying other initiatives that have had success in addressing issues of cumulative and disparate impact in native, indigenous, people of color, frontline and sacrifice zone communities.
  - Engage host communities in community-based, local and traditional knowledge, research and science for studying and monitoring health and remediating pollution.
  - Continue to host and support relevant community-based participatory research related to the refuge and the community by UNM and other educational institutions (i.e. UNM Health Education Program, the Sustainability Studies Program, UNM Environmental Law Clinic and other educational institutions).
- C. The refuge should seek guidance from the community coalition on how to best monitor, report, and elicit input about potential negative effects of the refuge's growth and development on the Mountain View community and Pueblo of Isleta. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
- Establish community-based EJ standards and indicators for the EJ ScoreCard to actively monitor the impact of refuge activities on the community, in particular those that create economic burdens.
  - Attend meetings and communicate with local organizations, schools, neighborhood associations, and other groups to address and mitigate developments and activities as a result of refuge actions that may have a negative impact.
  - Host meetings and programs to elicit and address community concerns about refuge development and actively work on solutions.
  - Work with partners to identify local residents that may assist and support the dissemination of information to the Mountain View and South Valley communities and Pueblo of Isleta.



# ENVIRONMENTAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE GOALS, STRATEGIES, and ACTION ITEMS



## GOAL 4 - INTEGRATING EJ INTO NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

Use existing and develop, as needed, funding opportunities, training, and educational opportunities to aid and strengthen native and indigenous peoples, people of color, and low-income communities in their efforts to build and sustain environmentally and economically sound communities in the Mountain View Neighborhood, Pueblo of Isleta, and South Valley.

The refuge aspires to be a relevant and involved community partner and should lend support, skills, services, resources and expertise in order to strengthen, aid and support the host communities in their endeavors to improve the environment in which they live.

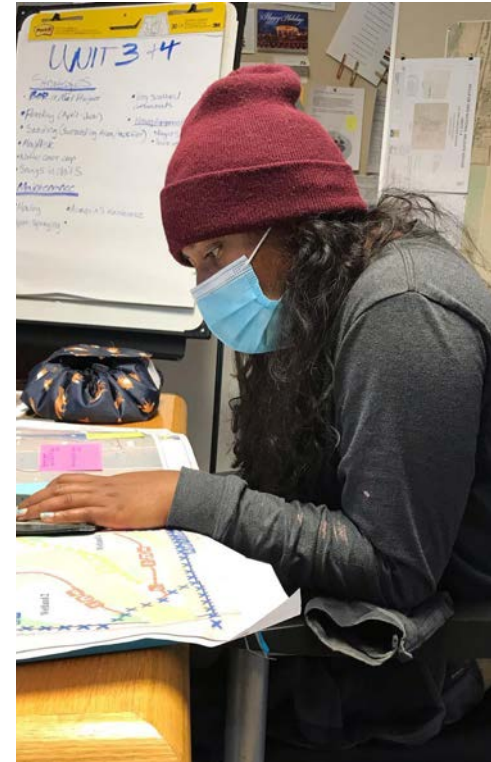
To this end, the refuge should contribute financial and staff resources towards developing and augmenting strategies, initiatives, and programs of the refuge to be more environmentally and economically just. These developments and strategies should focus on programs that build the capacity of the host communities to advance community-based conservation for collaborative management of public lands.

- A. The refuge will develop an Environmental Justice Literacy Curriculum and corresponding modules for training staff and partners. This curriculum and training should include EJ conceptualizations of environmentalism, the seminal documents of the EJ Movement, and EJ standards as well as indicators for the EJ ScoreCard which will be made available to DOI, FWS, the refuge, County, City, State agencies, partners and others. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Invest in and support the development and delivery of an Environmental Justice Literacy Curriculum, beginning with an outline and plan.
  - b. Assist the refuge in the creation of measurable EJ standards and indicators and the EJ ScoreCard. This EJ ScoreCard should help plan and measure the successful implementation of the EEJSP activities.



## GOAL 4 - INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTO NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

- c. Utilize the Library and Resource Center as an educational space for accessing history, science, research and information, including indigenous and traditional knowledge, science and ways of knowing.
  - d. Utilize the EJ literacy curriculum for professional development and educational training modules available for staff, youth interns, volunteers, fellow agencies, partners, vendors, visitors and others.
  - e. Utilize the EJ literacy curriculum and training modules to serve as a foundation for the development of a community-based accreditation/certification system.
  - f. Utilize the EJ literacy curriculum and training modules to serve as professional skill development, educational and career pathways for host communities.
  - g. Weave the EJ curriculum, the educational and professional training, interpretive exhibits and visitor experience together.
- B. The refuge should expand investment in community-based conservation strategies and forward equitable collaborative models for natural resource management. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
- a. Invest in and strengthen partnerships building the capacity of residents to engage in a collaborative model for shared leadership in refuge management and programming.
  - b. Ensure host communities understand their rights and responsibilities in community-based natural resource management.
  - c. Foster and support the growth of more community-based management and conservation projects led by community.
  - d. Prioritize programs building the capacity of host communities to engage as vendors and contractors in refuge developments, such as contract acquisition training.
  - e. Develop EJ standards and indicators to the EJ ScoreCard to measure equity and participation in conservation activities.
  - f. Consider integrating EJ standards and indicators when establishing agreements and partnerships related to the refuge.



# ENVIRONMENTAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE GOALS, STRATEGIES, and ACTION ITEMS



## GOAL 4 - INTEGRATING EJ INTO NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

- C. The refuge should invest and expand equitable direct and indirect investments into programming creating a more resilient local economy within host communities. This includes community-based procurement, local contracting, living wage employment and secure career development. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Establish EJ protocols for funding to ensure spending and investments related to the refuge repair harms and forward community ownership, rather than gentrify, displace community or perpetuate environmental racism.
  - b. Establish EJ-related standards and indicators for the EJ ScoreCard to assess quality of programming and impacts of investments.
  - c. Invest in building the capacity of host communities to develop and deliver community-led programming and community-based research.
  - d. Invest in community-governed projects and infrastructure, such as the Mountain View Community Garden and Sustainability Project.
  - e. Prioritize youth, families and residents in the host communities for living wage employment and career pathway opportunities related to refuge programming.
  - f. Support or co-host educational, career and employment fairs with host community residents, institutions and organizations.
  - g. Develop a community-based business model for the Friends Nature Store to engage host communities in operations, beginning with integrating EJ protocols to support ecological restoration, living wage employment, local vendors as well as prioritizing and highlighting women, native, indigenous and people of color products for sale.
- D. The refuge with support from the EJLT should use the Principles of Working Together and Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing to develop EJ protocols for programming on or related to the refuge. This should include the actual programming and all related materials related to the National Wildlife Refuge System, environmental justice, climate justice, resource management, and policy. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:

## GOAL 4 - INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTO NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMING

- a. Integrate EJ protocols into agreements with partners. Protocol should call for EJ educational training for partner personnel.
  - b. Develop EJ protocol for development of informational materials that are used for programming on or related to the refuge.
  - c. Ensure EJ is integrated into public presentations, workshops and other educational programming.
  - d. Work with the Pueblo of Isleta to integrate community-based, traditional and indigenous knowledge, science and research into refuge programming.
- E. Build capacity of the host communities to develop, deliver and assess their own community-driven development initiatives. As well analyze and engage in outside development decision making impacting the environmental, economic and social health of the host communities. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
- a. Help build the capacity of host communities to fund, develop and deliver their own community-based planning and development projects.
  - b. Establish EJ standards and indicators for the EJ ScoreCard relevant for assessing impacts of development on and related to the refuge.
  - c. Encompass native, indigenous, traditional and community-based ways of assessing and evaluating community planning and development, and integrate them into community-based EJ standards and indicators.
  - d. Implement community-based strategies to address community development that results in green gentrification, displacement, hardship, and inequities in short and long term distribution of benefits.
  - e. Leverage community-based plans and planning processes to elevate their strategies and inform findings of other local, state and federal development activities impacting the refuge and host communities.
  - f. Promote strategies involving native and traditional knowledge and cultural ways of conservation, community building and ecological stewardship.



# ENVIRONMENTAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE GOALS, STRATEGIES, and ACTION ITEMS



## GOAL 5 - JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The refuge should integrate its environmental and economic justice strategies with the DOI's environmental justice strategies and Title VI and VII of the Civil Right Act, American Indian Religious Freedoms Act, and other relevant state and federal laws, executive orders and policies. The Environmental and Economic Justice Strategic Plan (EEJP) will include diversity and inclusion goals and the Safe Place Policy of the refuge.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from discrimination based on race, color or national origin in programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Title VI states that: No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. The refuge should take measures to ensure against discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, differently abled, cultural beliefs, and sexual orientation.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin when employed or seeking employment with the Federal government and establishes the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which enforces this Act. In the Supreme Court case *Bostock v Clayton County, GA* in June 2019, the Supreme Court ruled that this Act does protect people from discrimination based on gender identity, which in some instances is grouped with sexual orientation and/or sex, making this a protected class.

The American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 is a policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rites including the use of medicinal plants associated with their traditional religions.

In January 2021, President Biden established two new Executive Orders regarding racial equity and gender discrimination.

- Executive Order 13988: Executive Order on preventing and combating discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Executive Order 13985: Executive Order on advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the Federal Government.



## GOAL 5 - JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Furthermore, the State of New Mexico enacted the Human Rights Act in 1969 to ensure that all New Mexicans are protected from discrimination in employment, housing, credit and public accommodation. The Human Rights Bureau is responsible for enforcing the Human Rights Act under the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. This Act prohibits “discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, sex, age, physical and mental handicap, serious medical condition, spousal affiliation, sexual orientation, and gender identity”.

- A. In alignment with the above principles, laws and policies, the refuge should take measures to ensure against discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, differently abled, cultural beliefs, and sexual orientation. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Support anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion training for its staff, contracted partners, vendors, interns, and volunteers.
  - b. Create, practice and promote a culture of safe place.
  - c. Ensure that programming opportunities and employment are made available and accessible to all populations.
  - d. Ensure that staff and relevant partners will be knowledgeable about relevant state and federal laws, executive orders, and policies regarding diversity, equity and inclusion.
- B. The refuge should work to provide equitable accessibility to the refuge and its programs. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Continue to directly support transportation accessibility to the refuge, and advocate for more equitable public transit systems.
  - b. Ensure educational and programming activities are hosted in spaces that are accessible.
  - c. Provide reasonable accommodations to employees and visitors to facilitate accessibility and inclusion.
  - d. Form and convene an accessibility committee for all refuge-led special events.
  - e. Conduct an accessibility assessment on its facilities and programs to identify and address gaps in accessibility. This assessment will be updated as needed as facilities change or develop.



# ENVIRONMENTAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE GOALS, STRATEGIES, and ACTION ITEMS

## GOAL 5 - JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, CONTINUED

- C. The refuge should work on creating and implementing a Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
- Include in the plan specific guidance on standards and indicators for the EJ ScoreCard for evaluating progress of diversity and inclusion.
  - Research best practices and advise with the local community for fulfilling or adhering to this plan.
  - Integrate and align with Environmental Justice Principles and the Principles of Working Together.
- D. The refuge should identify language justice and access resources, and budget for interpretation and translation of refuge materials, public presentations and training, including audio translation equipment. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
- Ensure all materials be published for English, Spanish, Native and American Sign Language communities when appropriate, and others as requested.
  - Integrate into their budget funding for interpretation and translation technology and equipment for both virtual and physical events.
  - Identify and prioritize volunteer and local experts to support language access needs, including providing services.
  - Ensure translation services are offered whenever those services are needed, with sufficient time to meet the request.





## GOAL 6 - COMMUNITY-BASED EJ MODEL FOR URBAN REFUGE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION



### GOAL 6 - COMMUNITY-BASED EJ MODEL FOR URBAN REFUGE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

The refuge should adhere to the Urban Wildlife refuge Standards of Excellence and commits to being a model for urban refuges nation-wide, interagency collaboration, and community involvement in order to strengthen its impact and uplift the refuge and its community partners.

Valle de Oro NWR, as an urban wildlife refuge, aims to engage the urban community as a partner in wildlife conservation, to build an urban conservation constituency, to model community-based urban refuge development nationally, and to serve as a gateway to the greater National Wildlife refuge system. The Urban Wildlife Standards of Excellence are comprised of 8 standards which serve as a framework for urban refuges with regard to the collaboration among the FWS and urban communities, on or off the refuge site: (1) Know and Relate to the Community, (2) Connect Urban People with Nature Via Stepping Stones of Engagement, (3) Build Partnerships, (4) Be a Community Asset, (5) Ensure Adequate Long-Term Resources, (6) Provide Equitable Access, (7) Ensure Visitors Feel Safe and Welcome, and (8) Model Sustainability.

Recognizing that the approach for every urban refuge must be as flexible and unique as the community it serves, Valle de Oro NWR has committed to an interagency, community-based, and transparent approach to the development of its infrastructure and programs in order to respect, include in decision making, and address the expectations and needs of the host communities and the environmental justice community legacy which exists. This includes creating community-based EJ standards that align with the standards of excellence.

# ENVIRONMENTAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE GOALS, STRATEGIES, and ACTION ITEMS

## GOAL 6 - COMMUNITY-BASED EJ MODEL FOR URBAN REFUGE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION, CONTINUED

- A. The refuge should continue to reach out to Tribal Nations in a government-to-government capacity. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should continue to:
  - a. Maintain contact as appropriate with the Pueblo of Isleta and other local Pueblos and Tribal Nations.
  - b. Distribute materials about refuge resources, opportunities and activities to the Pueblo of Isleta and other local Pueblos and Tribal Nations.
  - c. Share information on environmental and conservation issues as appropriate with the Pueblo of Isleta and other local Pueblos and Tribal Nations.
  - d. Invest in collaborations promoting the Pueblo of Isleta and native peoples to practice native and indigenous natural resource management knowledge, science and cultural ways to support achieving EEJSP goals.
- B. The refuge, with its EJ partners, should continue to develop interagency collaborations recommended in President Clinton's Executive Order 12898, President Biden's Executive Order 13990 and Governor Richardson's Executive Order 2005-056. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Continue collaborations within the DOI and FWS, with the EPA and other relevant federal agencies, the County, City, State government agencies.
  - b. Continue to elevate community-based strategies and inform fellow agencies of findings related to collaborative natural resource management.
  - c. Continue to promote the use of local community-based standards and indicators which consider cultural and traditional knowledge and science and include these in the EJ ScoreCard.
- C. Interagency collaborations should assist in directing funding and resources to the refuge for community-based natural resource management and localized conservation models. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:
  - a. Continue to establish EJ protocols for engaging in inter-agency collaborations and representing its host communities.
  - b. Continue to partner with other government agencies to seek and apply for grants to meet the goals of the EEJSP.
  - c. Continue to attend, participate, and share community needs at inter-agency meetings and bring back appropriate information and resource opportunities to the community.
  - d. Continue to advocate that inter-agency meetings incorporate processes that allow for communities to speak for themselves and engage in decisions being made.
  - e. Continue to support facilitation of interagency planning and articulation of emergency response, evacuation plans, and drills.
  - f. Continue to work on developing stronger community-to-government relations for more equitable collaborations.

## GOAL 6 - COMMUNITY-BASED EJ MODEL FOR URBAN REFUGE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

D. The refuge should continue to model and share interagency efforts for incorporating environmental and economic justice in a community-based approach that makes it a model for the development of National Wildlife Refuges and other public lands. To accomplish this, the refuge with the support of partners, should:

- a. Continue to integrate community-based EJ standards and indicators, to work along with the Standards of Excellence, into the EJ ScoreCard to assess and ensure the performance collaborations between the refuge and host communities.
- b. Establish EJ protocols for the promotion, development and delivery of community-based conservation and urban refuge management models, training and learning resources for fellow sites.
- c. Publish the Valle de Oro EEJSP online and work with host communities to accurately promote challenges and successes.
- d. Continue to present on and advocate for the community-based research and the collaborative process that produced this plan.
- e. Continue to consult, exchange information and prioritize partnerships with agencies organizing with frontline communities and sacrifice zones.
- f. Continue to advocate for alignment of bottom-up and top-down strategies for innovating and establishing EJ models for community-based conservation and natural resource management.







## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Community Accountability Group (CAG)** - Consists of residents, organizations and institutions that are dedicated to the successful integration of EJ into refuge programs, policies and activities throughout the implementation of the EEJSP.

**Community-Based Natural Resource Management** - When community members - usually in collaboration and partnership with other groups - conduct research on, analyze issues and develop strategies to assist in managing the resources in a way that benefits the health of human and non-human life.

**Community-Based Participatory Research** - Research which enlists those who are most affected by a community issue – typically in collaboration or partnership with others who have research skills – to conduct research on and analyze that issue, with the goal of devising strategies to resolve it.

**Community-Based Procurement** - Procurement is the process an organization undertakes to source and purchase a good or service for a specific project or program. Community-based procurement involves community throughout the stages of procurement, this includes identifying the goods or services needed for the project, selecting a vendor (one who provides good or service), negotiating the price and terms and receiving and assessing the quality of the goods and services provided.

**Determinants of Health** - Is a science of looking at conditions and factors in which directly impact the health of people who live, work, play, pray and/or learn in those conditions. These circumstances and conditions can be environmental, economic, social, cultural and political.

**Environmental Justice** - Emerged from grass-roots and social justice organizing efforts related to fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. This was in response to a long legacy of environmental racism in land-use policy and development. The EPA defines EJ as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

**Environmental Justice ScoreCard** - Is a method of assessing the integration of EJ into the refuge programming and management, it is composed of national measures related to Justice40 and local measures developed through community processes.





## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Environmental Justice Leadership Team** - Is composed of Los Jardines Institute, Friends of Valle de Oro and the Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge, this group is responsible for providing best practices and information for integrating EJ into the refuge.

**Equity / Equitable** - Is about human and non-human life receiving fair, impartial and just allocation of resources.

**Frontline Community** - Are those that experience “first and worst” the consequences of environmental injustice and climate change. Often native, indigenous, people of color and low-income communities who lack infrastructure and capacity to participate in decision making processes that impact their lives.

**Host Community** - Means any neighborhood, city, town or county (dependent on situation) who hosts a specific entity, project or program.

**Indicator** - Are clues, signs or markers that measure change of a program or project and help determine how close a program or project is to its desired vision or outcome.

**Intergenerational** - Being or occurring between two or more generations.

**Localized** - Specific to a particular place, where many factors are consistent. Such as culture, geography, language, etc.

**Multicultural** - Relating to or including two or more unique cultures.

**Participatory Budgeting** - Is a process in which community members have the power to identify, discuss and prioritize public spending projects and gives them the power to make decisions on how money is spent.

**Principle** - Is a kind of rule, belief or idea that guides a group or person, often associated with a system of thought.

**Protocol** - Are a set of guidelines outlining practices and processes to be followed, often based on a group's agreed principles, values, rights and responsibilities.

**Sacrifice Zones** - Is a specific geographic area (place) that has been permanently impaired by environmental damage or economic disinvestment.

**Standard** - A specific point of measurement that must be reached or maintained, in both quantity and quality.

**Vendor** - Is a person or company that is a supplier of a good or service.





# TIMELINE

**May 2021 - September 2021:** Refuge and Environmental Justice Leadership Team develops an implementation plan that includes actions towards accomplishing goals, lead organizations and completion dates.

**September 2021:** Refuge and Environmental Justice Team publishes full 2021-2025 EEJSP and Implementation Plan.

**May 2021 - September 2025:** Refuge and partners carry out action steps in the EEJSP

**October 2023 - April 2024:** Refuge and Environmental Justice Leadership Team develop an interim Implementation Report and make document available to the community by April 30, 2024.

**October 2024 - September 2025:** Refuge and partners conduct a strategic plan review and update and make 2026-2030 EEJSP available to the community by September 30, 2025.

## WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE INDIVIDUALS WHO SERVED AS MEMBERS OF THE CORE PLANNING TEAM FOR THIS PLAN

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PLAN SUMMARY  
UPDATED APRIL 2021

Valle de Oro  
National Wildlife Refuge

ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE STRATEGIC PLAN