Summary of the 2016 AQMP Socioeconomic Assessment EJ Working Group Meeting #1
April 14, 2016

Main Discussion Points:

1. **The EJWG overwhelmingly supported a population-weighted approach instead of the proposed area-weighted approach.**

   Background: IEc currently ranks all census tracts in the South Coast region for each of their proposed alternative EJ definitions. The highest ranked tracts are designated as EJ areas until the combined land area reaches approximately 15% of total South Coast area. This approach was chosen based on the air quality criteria in SCAQMD's current EJ definition: only the grid cells with top 15% of grid-average PM2.5 concentration or toxic cancer risk could be potentially included as an EJ area. The other criteria—poverty criteria—requires 10% of an area's population fall under the federal poverty line.

   EJWG Comments: Stakeholders expressed concern that this approach may defy the EJ screening purpose of identifying vulnerable/susceptible populations. For example, when the threshold for distinguishing between EJ from non-EJ communities is too low (e.g., covering a large share of total population) or when an EJ community's definition does not sufficiently capture various types of environmental risks (see Point #2), "good" areas can outcompete the worse-off, more vulnerable/susceptible communities.

   Kimberly Clark with SCAG reported that, for the purpose of EJ analysis in RTP/SCS, their cut-off was 2/3 of total SCAG population for analysis at the TAZ-level and 1/3 for analysis at the level of census place. Ms. Clark explained that the thresholds were chosen to ensure all known disadvantaged areas are included. Alvaro Alvarado with ARB reported a threshold of 25% of total population being used by ARB.

   IEc Response: IEc explained that this area-weighted approach was chosen so that the results from alternative EJ definitions for the purpose of sensitivity tests will be more comparable with South Coast's definition of EJ communities.

2. **The EJWG recommends including other environmental hazards to capture the "cumulative burden" EJ communities face**.

   Background: IEc recommends using air quality matrices for PM2.5, toxic cancer risk, and ozone as the environmental indicator for alternative EJ screening. Another alternative is to also add matrices for other environmental burdens including poor drinking water and pesticides into the overall environmental indicator.

   EJWG Comments: Many disadvantaged communities suffer from multiple forms of environmental hazards and the resulting health risks. Members recommended considering proximity to potential environmental hazards. Dr. Alvarado argued that potential hazards, though may not have occurred, still present a heightened health risk when compared to other communities. Madeline Wander, Senior Data Analyst at USC and with the EJSM team, expressed willingness to work with SCAQMD staff on relevant data.

IEc Response: IEc reiterated the importance of "fit for purpose" and raised the concern that, by including too many non-air quality related environmental hazards in the screening stage of analysis, it may potentially bias the subsequent policy impact results (the methodology of which constitutes the second part of the contract). In particular, this approach could potentially designate some communities as EJ areas although air pollution may not be the main issue there. As a result, air regulations/programs may be misinterpreted as ineffective in alleviating EJ inequality.

3. **The EJWG prefers the use of minority status in lieu of other proxy variables.**

   Background: In order to avoid potentially running afoul of Prop 209, race/ethnicity was excluded in the definition of EJ communities that could be potentially used for grant allocations.

   EJWG Comments: Concerns were raised that, although the inclusion of linguistic isolation indicator may mitigate the exclusion of race/ethnicity, it will still omit the African American community in the region, many of whom live close to potential environmental hazards that were not sufficiently captured as discussed in Point #2.

   SCAQMD Response: Staff did not oppose the idea of including minority status in sensitivity tests and for this purpose only.

<u>Other comments:</u>

- In regards to IEc's next deliverable that was explained during the presentation, Dr. Alvarado advised against using mortality risk changes as the sole matrix for inequality evaluation. This is because mortality is skewed towards older populations, whereas EJ groups in the South Coast region are generally younger.
- Ms. Wander commended the regional scoring approach, which was considered as an improvement from directly adopting CalEnvironScreen that only allowed a statewide scoring. Ms. Wander also asked for revisions to IEc's draft report regarding the nature and purpose of EJSM.
- Dr. Alvarado suspected the accuracy of the calculated EJ population share in IEc's presentation—is it plausible that close to 50% of South Coast population living on 15% of land?

<u>Follow-ups:</u>

- IEc will remove diesel PM to avoid double counting
- IEc will revise maps (turn projection) and add cities/highways to help with identification
- IEc will work with SCAQMD staff on potential revisions to air quality matrices
- IEc can provide spreadsheets to help with better understanding of the proposed screening matrices