



SOUTH COAST AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT PRESS RELEASE

www.aqmd.gov

@SouthCoastAQMD    

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 12, 2021

MEDIA CONTACT:

Bradley Whitaker, (909) 396-3456, Cell: (909) 323-9516

Nahal Mogharabi, (909) 396-2598, Cell: (909) 323-9479

press@aqmd.gov

South Coast AQMD Hires Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer to Elevate Programs and Initiatives

Anissa “Cessa” Heard-Johnson joins Executive Management team

DIAMOND BAR, CA – Today, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) hired the agency’s first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer (DEIO). Anissa “Cessa” Heard-Johnson will join South Coast AQMD’s executive management team to develop strategies that integrate diversity, equity and inclusion into South Coast AQMD programs and initiatives.

South Coast AQMD established the DEIO position to focus on the advancement of racial justice and equity both internally and externally, as part of its overall goal to support communities of color and other historically underrepresented groups. The DEIO will focus initially on South Coast AQMD internal policies, procedures and program and then assist with community programs.

“We have committed to supporting communities of color and want to do our part to break down barriers,” said Wayne Nastri, South Coast AQMD’s Executive Officer. “We are pleased that Anissa is joining our executive team. Her expertise will undoubtedly help elevate our efforts.”

Heard-Johnson brings to over two decades of experience in equity-based programming, training, instruction and administration holding high-level diversity and equity positions at both two-year community colleges and universities in California, Oregon, and Washington. Her experience includes assessing organizations, developing and implementing new programs, and providing training for all levels of staff. She has a Master of Science in Educational Leadership, Policy, and Management from the University of Oregon and a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in Elementary Education with a minor in African American Studies from San Diego State University. Currently, Anissa is a doctoral candidate at Seattle University, researching the experiences of diversity/equity practitioners during the dual pandemics of coronavirus and social justice movements.

On June 12, 2020 South Coast AQMD issued a statement in support of the Black community and communities of color committing the agency to be “part of the change,” striving to build bridges, break

down barriers, and encourage conversations. South Coast AQMD has since been actively working to deliver progress. As part of that, South Coast AQMD established the Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Advisory (IDEA) panel. The IDEA panel is an employee-driven group made up of diverse volunteers from almost every division in the organization.

In addition, South Coast AQMD will continue to build upon its many environmental justice initiatives and programs such as the Assembly Bill 617 ([AB 617](#)) Clean Air Protection Program, the Environmental Justice Community Partnership ([EJCP](#)), the Why Healthy Air Matters ([WHAM](#)) High School Air Quality Education Program and the Clean Air Program for Elementary Students (CAPES) Program.

South Coast AQMD also recently joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), a national network of government organizations working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.

South Coast AQMD is the air pollution control agency for major portions of Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside counties, including the Coachella Valley. For news, air quality alerts, event updates and more, please visit us at www.aqmd.gov, download our award-winning app, or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

###