

TACKLING MULTIFACETED ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES: THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND HOW TO CREATE IT

Isla Scott, @islascott21, Program on the Environment, University of Washington

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Site Supervisor: Noemie Maxwell, Defenders of North SeaTac Park

Faculty Advisor: Karen Litfin, Political Science, University of Washington

Research has shown that community engagement is critical for creating political and public change. However, creating this type of engagement in low-income and multi-ethnic communities can be challenging. Because of unjust systemic patterns, these communities often face more immediate needs, such as affordable housing, and cannot prioritize long-term problems, such as climate change, or narrow concerns, such as risks to local parks. Through an internship with the South Seattle Climate Action Network, I addressed these problems concerning community engagement by using North SeaTac Park as a case study and implementing various research methods. The purpose of the study was to determine the most productive and effective ways of communicating environmental concerns to affected communities that would create and enhance community engagement. To do this, I conducted a literature review of effective communication methods and the importance of community engagement. I also conducted in-person and digital outreach and utilized traditional marketing, such as flyers and fact sheets I made. Lastly, I commented at Port of Seattle and King County Council public hearings. My findings showed that in-person outreach was the most effective method, and the use of pathos and communication with the local government are also vital. Thus, as a result of my work, I propose an environmental communications framework that focuses on three tiers, defined as network of communication, platform of outreach, and delivery of message, to increase engagement in any given community. Utilizing this finding and its implications can drastically drive social transformation by amplifying a community's voice.