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Environmental Justice Coordinating Council (EJCC) One Water Summit 2023 Report

During the week of November 13th, 2023, five Environmental Justice Coordinating Council (EJCC) Fellows attended the One Water Summit 2023 in Tucson, AZ. One EJCC Fellow who attended is 16 years old.

The Summit provided an opportunity for EJCC Fellows to meet and interact with other water champions, environmental justice organizers, activists and change agents from around the country and to hear about the work they are doing addressing water insecurity.

While at the Summit, EJCC Fellows participated in peer exchanges, learning labs, site visits, and workshops, which were designed to develop practical knowledge on pressing issues in the water sector. In addition, EJCC Fellows were able to attend a Water Prize Ceremony, three Plenary Sessions and a closing luncheon celebration.

What EJCC Fellows learned by attending the Summit:

Heat island effect of areas that used to get rain but don't anymore because of the removal of trees for the purposes of concrete installations and developing communities and buildings; Water is life, and we should look at water as a life source instead of as a commodity or a resource; Some states actually get too much water, like Michigan, and needs to capture it through green infrastructures before it gets into the their systems; Septic systems are not regulated by the EPA; 97 percent of the earth's water is salt water; Everybody is struggling in one way or another when it comes to water whether it be affordability or lack of access to clean drinking water; Hemp is being used to remove PFAS from water; and only 3% of America is Urban.

Sessions/workshops EJCC Fellows attended included:

Tapping into Distributed One Water Solutions

Advancing Utility Leadership on Equity and Affordability

Engaging at the State Level for One Water Action

Shifting Narratives for a One Water Future

EPA Office of Water

Water and Sanitation Access in the United States

People Power and Water Workforce
Innovations

Realizing Water Affordability and Access
through Innovation and a Common Good
Agenda

Futurist Dreams for a One Water
Transformation

One Water Toolbox: Artist Residencies and
Cross-Sector Collaboration

Ripples to Waves: Regional Workforce
Collaboratives

From Message to Movement: Building
Impactful Water Campaigns

Unlocking the Potential of Water and Public
Health Partners
Climate Adaptation, Just Resilience, and
Community Participation

Water's Role in Democracy, Civil Cohesion,
and Justice

Unifying Urban and Rural Interests Through
Water

What EJCC Fellows liked most about the Summit:

- “The four young students from the HBCU, Delaware State University’s Water Quality Hemp Analysis Laboratory research on using Hemp to take PFAS out of the water was inspiring.”
- “I was most inspired by Tucson’s strategies for conserving water. They are still consuming the same amount of water now that they were back in the 1980’s even though they have 200,000 more people.”
- “The Native [American] community using their young voices and educating their community and having young people at the tables and being involved with issues that relate to the water issues.”
- “It gave me an opportunity to learn more about water.”
- “I enjoyed the summit. I have a better understanding about the work of the one water summit.”
- “As a junior in high school student the water summit allowed me to get a feel of possible career fields that I would be interested in related to STEM.”
- “I am honored to have the opportunity to have attended the One Water Summit this year with my mom along with me. I had really good conversations and got a good preview of what a STEM path could possibly look like for me, and where my interests are within it.”

EJCC Fellows Summit observations and suggestions:

EJCC Fellows strongly felt that there is a need for a presentation by Black community members about why this work is important to them and what Black community members need to be a part of the work. In addition, EJCC Fellows suggested that:



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- “Sessions should be recorded because there is a lot of great information, and it would be helpful to be able to go back and review the sessions for a better understanding.”
- “I think the summit really needs to focus more on action plans and solutions in the future.”
- “I would like to have more sessions on what to do when you get home.”
- “There should be sessions on specific laws to try to lobby for in each state.”
- “There should be information more about how to build specific green infrastructures in your state.”
- “There should be more information about where communities can go to get funding support for their cause.”
- “I thought it was a good way to learn more about Water systems and care especially on a national scale. Along with it being a good way to connect with other people to see what we can be doing as communities.”
- “I think that they should invite more groups like EJCC and MORE YOUTH.”
- “I think there should be more of a focus on action plans and not have it crammed at the end.”

EJCC Fellows concerns about our nation’s water:

- “My biggest concern about our nations water is the allocation of clean, safe, and affordable water. “
- “Not enough attention and care is given to the water systems before disasters occur to mitigate worst-case scenarios like we have seen before.”
- “Often times decisions are made by the private and public sectors without community voice.”
- “Everything surrounding the water crisis seems so political, racial, and personal.”
- “That there will be no [clean] water to use for our next generations.”
- “Situations like Jackson, Mississippi will happen more often.”

Minnesota Delegation:

EJCC Fellows attended the Summit as part of the Minnesota Delegation of 24 attendees consisting of community members, water utilities and nonprofit groups with diverse perspectives and relationships to water. Members of the Delegation included: Frontline Community: *EJCC*, Tribal Representatives: *Honor the Earth*, Water Utilities: *Metropolitan Council and Saint Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS)*, and nonprofits: *Freshwater and Ducks Unlimited*.

Delegations were required to identify a pressing water need facing their community and to set a goal to accomplish over the next year. Each Delegation presented their commitment to action with Water Alliance staff and Summit participants at the closing plenary session.

Commitment to Action:

The Minnesota Delegation's Commitment to Action is to improve community engagement around regional water issues through education, communication, and co-creation while committing to regular check-ins and facilitating the partnership between community, public, and private entities.

Thanks to our Supporters:

Public Policy Project, EJCC Fellows, and Environmental Initiative would like to thank the following organizations and businesses for their generous support that made it possible for EJCC Fellows to attend the One Water Summit 2023:

- **US Water Alliance**
- **Barr Engineering**
- **Fresh Water**
- **Geosyntec**
- **Source Water**
- **Sustainable Growth Coalition**

“Thank you for your generous contribution that allowed me to attend this year's One Water Summit. I learned so much about the work that needs to be done to move in the direction of ensuring everyone has access to clean and safe drinking water. We appreciate your partnership in helping us to do the work.”

“I am thankful for the opportunity to attend the conference and learn so much and to be able to represent Minnesota and gain a better understanding of what is going on throughout the country with water.”

For more information or questions please contact James Trice, Public Policy Project, and Environmental Justice Coordinating Council (EJCC) at ppp.ejcc@gmail.com or (612) 702-9769.