

## **Activists relaunch black environmental justice network**

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Beverly Wright. Deep South Center for Environmental Justice/Green America

Advocates today relaunched a national environmental justice effort amid an ongoing national conversation about racial justice and a pandemic that has disproportionately affected black communities.

The National Black Environmental Justice Network announced today that it would re-form to bring together largely disparate community-based movements around the country.

Members of the group, originally founded in 1999, have worked on various collaborative projects in recent years, but it had not formally convened since Executive Director Damu Smith died in 2006.

"However, as we have seen the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on our community and the continued assaults on our environment by the Trump administration, there has been a groundswell among members, a resurgence of energy and purpose, that has brought us back together to protect Black America and put an end to these injustices," new Executive Director Beverly Wright said in a statement.

The organization said in a news release that members started discussing formally reestablishing the organization in January.

The effort includes several longtime environmental justice advocates, including Wright, who is also executive director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice; longtime

scholar and activist Robert Bullard; and Mustafa Santiago Ali of the National Wildlife Federation.

Over the last year or so, environmental justice generally has garnered more attention from federal lawmakers, and discussions have kicked off in the mainstream environmental movement about incorporating environmental justice communities into green groups' efforts to combat climate change (*[E&E Daily](#)*, Jan. 31).

It has only grown more prominent after George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis, highlighting systemic racism around the country, and COVID-19.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's initial research has found that the COVID-19 death rate among African Americans in New York City is 92.3 per 100,000, compared with 45.2 per 100,000 among white people.

"NBEJN is needed as much now as it was when it was first founded in 1999," Wright said. "The re-establishment of NBEJN, at its core, represents a re-commitment to Black people and their unfathomably relentless struggle to achieve the inalienable right to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'"