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# ENHANCING THE CIVIC CAPACITY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES: THE CASE STUDY OF FARMWORKERS IN OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

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### **Enhancing the Civic Capacity of Environmental Justice Communities: The Case Study of Farmworkers in Oxnard, California**

Communities affected by environmental health problems like pollution and pesticide use can enhance their civic capacity by maximizing the use of local media outlets, particularly ethnic radio and newspapers.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” However, many affected populations do not have the civic capacity to be informed and engaged on behalf of environmental health and well-being in their communities. Researchers, community organizations and policy makers can identify ways to enhance the civic resources, knowledge and input channels for impacted communities. In a study of Oxnard, a city in California with a large agricultural economy, researchers conducted survey research and content analysis of local media to determine why and how affected stakeholders are (under)engaged on environmental health issues. The study found that there was a general perception among Oxnard residents that they were at risk for exposure to environmental pollution. There was also a severe lack of information and opportunities for involvement on environmental issues in the community. However, there are ways to enhance to the civic capacity of environmental justice communities like Oxnard by maximizing the use of local media outlets, particularly ethnic radio and newspapers.