

# StuCo Environmental Citizenship News

## Week of November 23

### Need some good news?

With Thanksgiving fast approaching amidst an escalating pandemic, there is still good news to celebrate. So this week we've opted to highlight three:

First, we are excited about the growing likelihood that the next administration will integrate climate change into all federal government agencies and that environmental justice issues might be elevated within the Department of Justice through a new "Environmental and Climate Justice Division". Climate change and environmental justice are inherently cross-cutting issues that can get sidelined all too easily without formal and adequate institutional representation.

Another piece of good news is that Tristan da Cunha, a remote group of volcanic islands in the South Atlantic with just under 250 permanent residents, has just declared 90 percent of its territorial waters a "no take zone". That's an area of 242,181 square miles, roughly twice the size of the United Kingdom. Home to 85 percent of the population of endangered northern rockhopper penguins, large fish stocks, whales, dolphins, and most of the world's sub-Antarctic fur seals, the new protected area will provide a refuge from hunting, fishing, and other disruptive marine activities. See our photo of the week for a snapshot of the adorable rockhopper penguins.

And for the policy wonks, PG&E agreed in a June 2020 letter to the California Energy Commission to support CA energy efficiency building codes to require electrification of all new construction. As part of the state's 3-year building code review for Title 24 the utility's support (first in the nation) could help pave the way for a ban of natural-gas equipment installations for new buildings as early as 2022. Buildings now pose one of the major hurdles towards net-zero carbon goals due to their use of fossil fuels for heating and cooking. Several cities and counties have already adopted [electrification mandates](#), such as Menlo Park, Ojai, Sunnyvale, San Francisco and San Mateo County. In all, 50 municipalities in California have or are aiming to reduce the use of natural gas and other fossil fuels in buildings.

### Upcoming Dates & Events ...

- 11/17 CalTech [webinar](#) on decarbonization and net-zero strategies
- 11/20 Student preferences for Intersession 2021 are due. See the catalog [here](#).
- 11/21 - 11/29 Thanksgiving Break
- 11/16 Acterra is hosting a youth panel on bringing agricultural systems into a healthier balance. [Registration](#) is free.

## Good to know ...

From today's EPA's media desk: "Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the selection of the California Office of Planning and Research's Strategic Growth Council to receive \$200,000 for trainings to communities to address air quality and COVID-19 – the respiratory disease shown to disproportionately impact individuals exposed to higher levels of air pollution. The Strategic Growth Council will build capacity within California communities facing environmental justice challenges to address environmental issues as well as the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19. This newly funded project will empower community leaders from throughout California to drive change through a two-phase training and technical assistance program called Partners Advancing Climate Equity." Through the EPA's State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreement Program, the agency is providing \$2 million in grants over a two-year period to advance collaborative work with communities facing environmental justice challenges.

## Things you can do ...

The Aquarium of the Bay, a Smithsonian Affiliate, is looking for students to join the Earth Optimism Challenge! Further questions are welcome! Please direct them to [emily@bay.org](mailto:emily@bay.org). Sign up link: <https://bit.ly/3kmWlIt> by **Tuesday the 24th November, 2020**.

The San Mateo County Office of Education's Youth Climate Ambassadors (YCA) program helps your students gain the knowledge and skills to make a difference in the global and local climate emergency as they journey through the program. [Applications](#) for the YCA 2021 cohort are now open and the deadline is **November 29!**

## Photo of the Week



The endangered Northern Rockhopper Penguin, known by Tristan Islanders as Pinnamins. The archipelago is a major breeding area. Source: Danica Kirka, Associated Press for Greenwire.