# Central Coast Environmental Justice Communities Left Out of New Cal EnviroScreen Draft

In the draft of Cal Enviroscreen 3.0, the Central Coast region lost 10 census tracts formerly designated as top 25% environmental justice communities, approximately half of its total in Cal Enviroscreen 2.0. The vast majority of census tracts in Central Coast environmental justice communities including Oxnard, Santa Maria and Salinas scored lower in Cal Enviroscreen 3.0 than in version 2.0.

## Environmental Justice Issues in the Central Coast

Travelers pass through the Central Coast and see scenic agricultural fields, coastlines and mountains, but the region is marked by stark inequality, with low-income immigrant communities facing environmental justice issues stemming from the agricultural and energy production economy of rural central California. Growing cities like Oxnard, Santa Maria and Salinas as well as many small farmworker towns, where typically 70-90% residents are Latino and other people of color, face high levels of poverty and linguistic and cultural isolation, and low levels of education and health coverage.

The Central Coast region is considered the most negatively impacted in the state by pesticides, due to the extremely high levels of toxic fumigants in the strawberry industry and the prevalence of schools and neighborhoods directly adjacent to fields. Central Coast environmental justice communities also rank among the highest in water quality related indicators, including Drinking Water, Groundwater Threats, and Impaired Water Bodies. Oil and gas development has been a major industry in the Central Coast for generations, with Ventura County ranking the third largest oil producing county in the state after Kern and Los Angeles. Oil drilling, refineries and power plants are heavily concentrated around Latino communities, and new fossil fuel development continues to follow this pattern.

CAUSE has organized Central Coast environmental justice communities around pesticides, water quality, and oil and gas issues since 2006. Our communities are the sacrifice zone for the negative impacts of agriculture and energy production exported throughout the state, nation and world. However, the latest Cal Enviroscreen draft version 3.0 leaves out key environmental justice communities in the Central Coast, which would seriously harm our community's ability to advocate for changes to improve our environmental health. We strongly urge OEHHA to consider the impacts of changes between CES versions 2.0 and 3.0 on Central Coast communities and take steps to ensure the tool recognizes the environmental justice issues affecting our region.

CAUSE
Central Coast Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy

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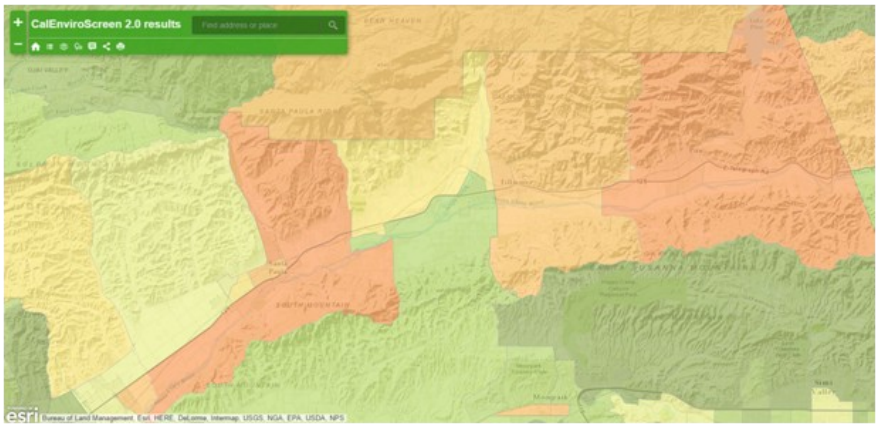
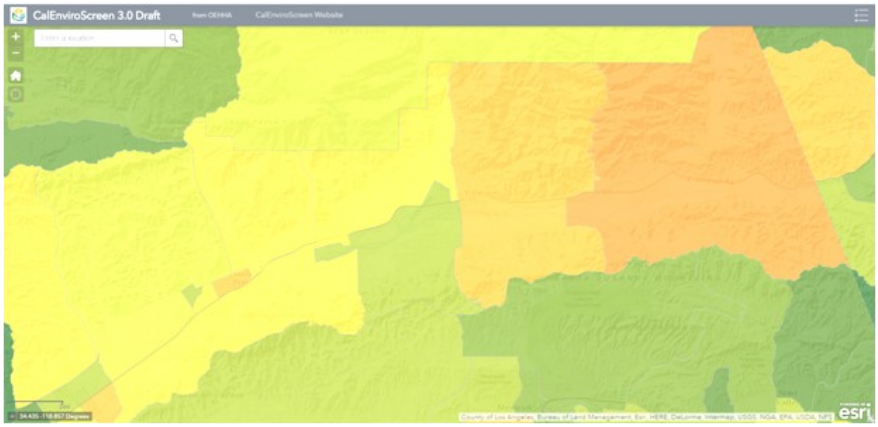
Predominantly Latino low-income communities in the Central Coast facing disproportionate impacts from agricultural pesticides, water contamination, and oil and gas development include the Santa Clara Valley, the Oxnard Plain, the Santa Maria Valley, and the Salinas Valley. Below are maps comparing their scores in Cal Enviroscreen version 2.0 with draft version 3.0.



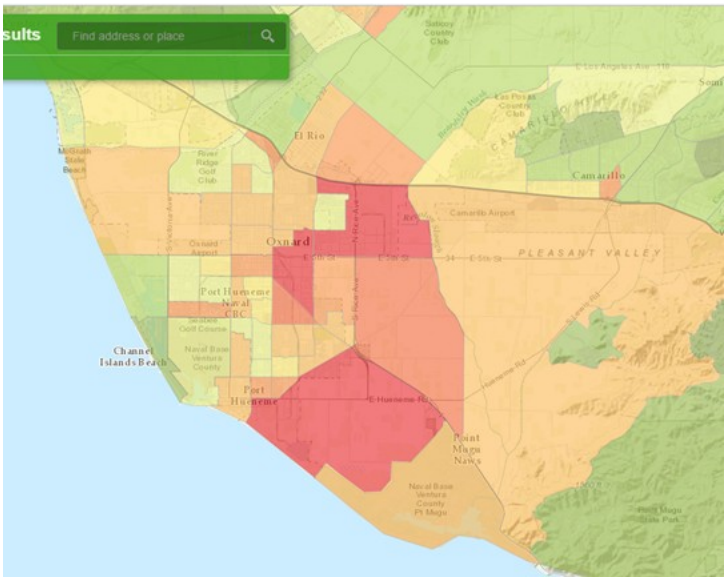

**Santa Clara Valley**
**CES 2.0**

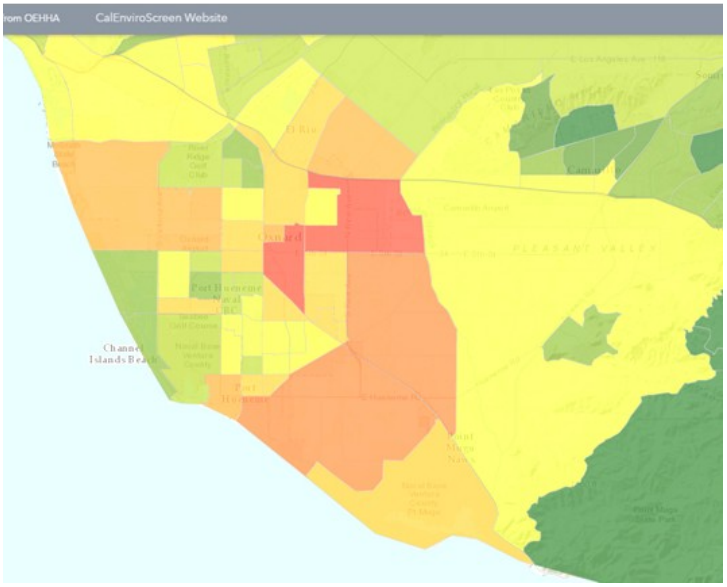


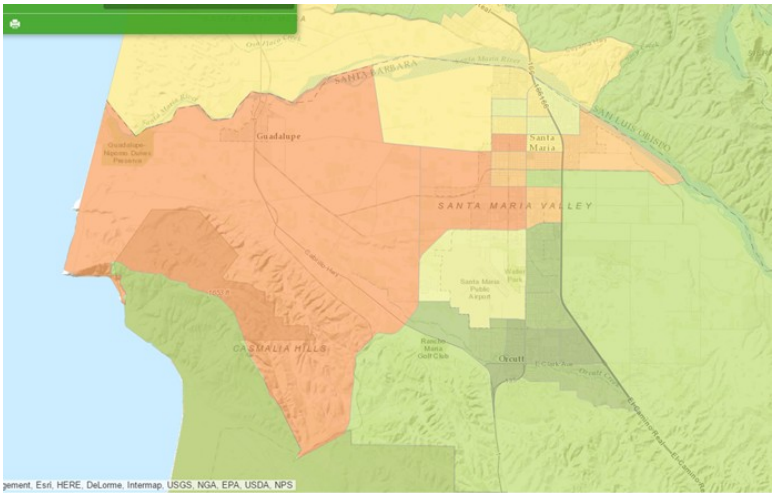

**Santa Clara Valley**
**CES 3.0**

**Oxnard Plain**
**CES 2.0**

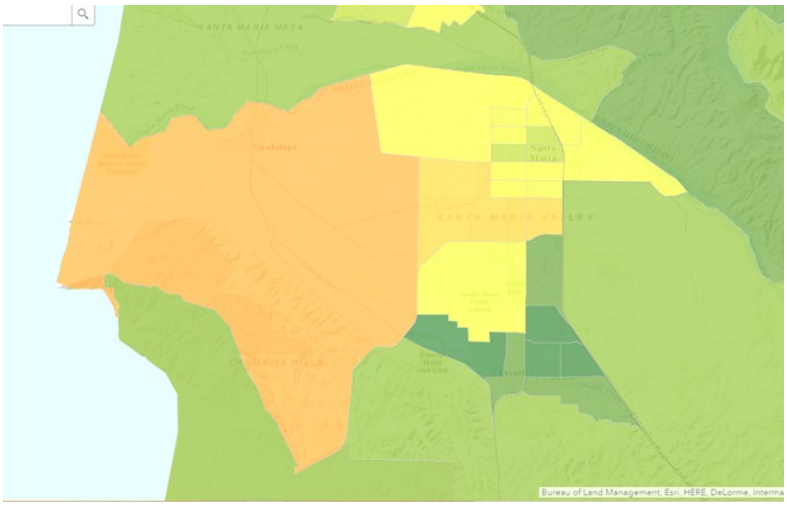
**Oxnard Plain**
**CES 3.0**



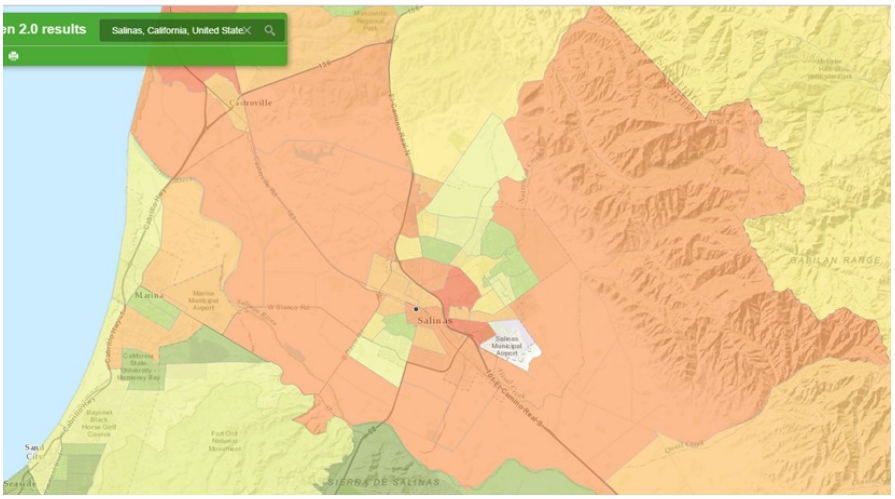



## Santa Maria Valley CES 2.0

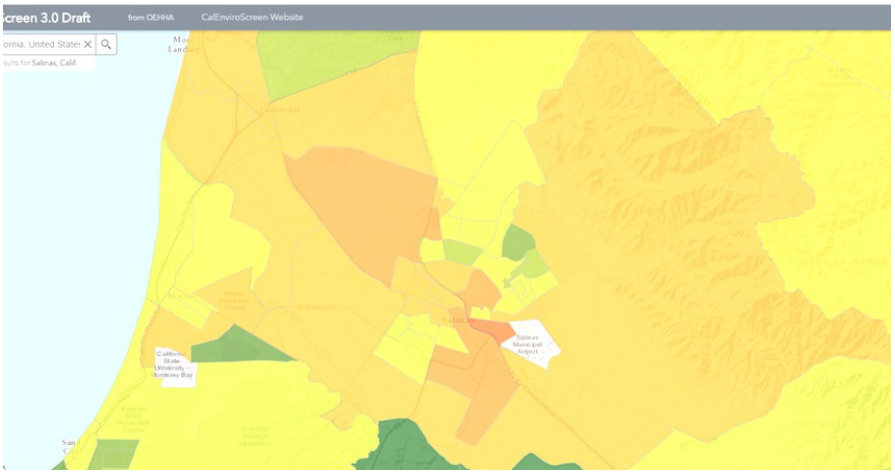



## Santa Maria Valley CES 3.0

## Salinas Valley CES 2.0




## Salinas Valley CES 3.0



## Recommendation: Include Age Indicator for Children Under 10

A potential solution that may help recognize Central Coast environmental justice communities in Cal Enviroscreen 3.0 is to include an age indicator for children. Cal Enviroscreen 2.0 included an indicator based on the population of children and infants under 10 and seniors over 65, which was removed in Cal Enviroscreen 3.0. This was done in part because large populations of seniors are common in more affluent areas, and often canceled out the large populations of children in more disadvantaged communities. However, CAUSE recommends including an age indicator solely based on children under 10 to highlight the vulnerability of children to health impacts from pollution, such as toxic pesticide exposure in the Central Coast.

The Central Coast's environmental justice communities are predominantly Latino immigrant agricultural towns, with a high proportion of families with young children, and many of the lost census tracts in the Central Coast are among the highest in the state for children under 10 years old. Central Coast communities also rank the highest in the state for toxic pesticide exposure, which is particularly harmful to the health of young children and infants, increasing children's likelihood of developing brain and neurological issues, cancer, and asthma. Pesticide exposure among Latino children in the Central Coast has been a contentious environmental justice issue since a 1999 lawsuit from Oxnard farmworker families that marked the first and only preliminary finding of discrimination in a civil rights lawsuit against the US EPA. In recent years, pesticide exposure among Central Coast Latino children has drawn national media attention, as a California Department of Public Health report found that Ventura County has the most students and Monterey County has the most schools near the highest levels of toxic pesticide use.

### Central Coast Census Top 25% Census Tracts Lost in Cal Enviroscreen 3.0

| City | Tract | Children < 10 | Pesticides |
|---|---|---|---|
| Salinas | 6053010506 | 98 | 98 |
| Salinas | 6053010504 | 85 | 99 |
| Salinas | 6053010606 | 84 | 100 |
| Moss Landing | 6053014601 | 79 | 98 |
| Guadalupe | 6083002502 | 91 | 96 |
| Santa Maria | 6083002402 | 97 | 99 |
| Oxnard | 6111004503 | 92 | 97 |
| Oxnard | 6111003900 | 94 | 94 |
| Santa Paula | 6111000500 | 74 | 94 |
| Piru | 6111000200 | 89 | 87 |

**CAUSE recommends the inclusion of a population indicator measuring children under 10 years old in the final Cal Enviroscreen 3.0.** An age indicator would improve the tool's assessment of different populations' vulnerability to environmental conditions throughout the state. Children face higher pollution exposure and experience more severe health problems than adults. Children spend more time outdoors, weigh less, have more exposed skin surface in relation to their weight, and breathe at a quicker rate compared to adults, all of which expose them to greater amounts of pollutants from their environment. Children's bodies are also less able to detoxify and expel pollutants. It is critical for the Cal Enviroscreen tool to measure the disproportionate impact of high levels of toxic pesticides on vulnerable communities such as children in immigrant farmworker communities throughout the Central Coast.