



**For immediate release**

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## **CalEPA Updates to Disadvantaged Communities Designation Expands Tribal Housing Eligibility for SOMAH**

**Sacramento, CA, July 25, 2022** - The Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing (SOMAH) Program has expanded eligibility for incentives to include lands under control of federally recognized Native American tribes as a result of a recent decision by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA).

"It is essential for the Public Utility Commission to consider impacts on communities that have been historically marginalized and excluded from opportunities for economic growth. The expanded definition will further encourage the Commission and other agencies to consider tribal communities when designing clean energy programs and targeting resources. For example, this new definition is currently under consideration in the Affordability Proceeding as a lens through which we consider the impacts of utility rate increases," said Darcie Houck, Commissioner for the California Public Utility Commission.

In expanding its formal designation of disadvantaged communities (DACs), CalEPA notes that tribes themselves are not being labeled disadvantaged, but tribal lands are gaining the designation to expand equitable access to related funding, which includes programs like SOMAH.

SOMAH's [eligibility requirements](#) include qualifying under a DAC designation, which for the SOMAH Program is defined as scoring in the top 25 percent of census tracts statewide in the [CalEnviroScreen](#). CalEPA's updated DAC designation means that effective immediately, significantly more multifamily tribal homes on federally recognized tribal lands in California are eligible to enroll in the SOMAH Program and will have a streamlined path for doing so.

"The sovereign structure of tribal governments are often forced to be labeled as community-based organizations or nonprofits in order to access funding sources. The team at SOMAH has taken an equitable initiative to recognize that tribes are sovereign nations existing within the United States and should be treated as such. The expansion

of the CalEPA's designation to not force tribes to be classified as disadvantaged communities through the CalEnviroScreen is a move for energy equity for California's first people," said Elizabeth Elliott, Executive Director, Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority and member of SOMAH's [Advisory Council](#).

The SOMAH Program Administrator (PA) hopes that this expansion will encourage tribal communities across California to apply to the SOMAH Program. The PA would like to highlight both the availability of over \$400 million in funding currently available and the support the program can provide interested applicants through its no-cost [Technical Assistance](#) and Support Services.

Gina Jones, Director of Career Education Program for Owens Valley Career Development Center and member of the SOMAH [Job Training Taskforce](#) shares, "The inclusion and eligibility of Native American federally recognized tribes for SOMAH is a wonderful opportunity. I currently sit on the Big Pine Paiute Tribal Council as the secretary and know firsthand the impact that the DAC designation can and will provide for tribes."

Interested in learning more or joining the over 400 communities bringing solar to their communities? Visit [CalSOMAH.org](https://www.CalSOMAH.org) and/or call 858-244-1177 ext. 5 or email [contact@CalSOMAH.org](mailto:contact@CalSOMAH.org) for more information.

For further information on CalEPA's decision, see [Final designation of Disadvantaged Communities Pursuant to Senate Bill 535, May 2022](#), and [California Climate Investments to Benefit Disadvantaged Communities](#).

### **About the SOMAH Program**

The Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing (SOMAH) Program is available through 2030 with the purpose of incentivizing photovoltaic (PV) energy systems on multifamily affordable housing in California. The program's unique, community-based approach ensures long-term, direct economic benefits for low-income households, helps catalyze the market for solar on multifamily housing and creates jobs. SOMAH is funded up to \$100 million annually through the greenhouse gas allowance auction proceeds from 2016 to June 30, 2026, of Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Diego Gas & Electric Company, Southern California Edison Company, Liberty Utilities Company and PacifiCorp. SOMAH's goal is to install 300 megawatts of generating capacity by 2030.

For CPUC regulatory information on SOMAH, visit <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/somah>.