

INSIGHTS

## The Role of NGOs and the Private Sector in Environmental Justice With Matthew Tejada and Steven Cook

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By: [Daniel J. Pope](#) and [Steven Cook](#)

Environmental justice essentially means that all people — regardless of race, color, national origin or income — have the right to the same environmental protections and benefits, as well as meaningful involvement in the laws, regulations and policies that impact their communities.

On this episode of the Bracewell Environmental Law Monitor, guest [Matthew Tejada](#), senior vice president for environmental health at the [Natural Resources Defense Council \(NRDC\)](#), discusses environmental justice with host [Daniel Pope](#) and [Steven Cook](#), of counsel in Bracewell's [environment, lands and resources](#) practice.

Tune in to hear Dan, Matt, and Steven discuss environmental justice — a signature policy goal of the Biden administration. The conversation covers how this administration has fared in expanding both the focus of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on environmental justice and the role of non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the environmental justice movement.

### Featured Guests

Name: [Matthew Tejada](#)

**About:** Matt is senior vice president for environmental health at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), where he oversees NRDC's clean air, water, toxics and adaptation programs. He is also responsible for leading, scaling and operationalizing the teams, structures, partnerships and policy initiatives needed to tackle major health threats facing communities.

Company: [Natural Resources Defense Council \(NRDC\)](#)

Connect: [LinkedIn](#)

Name: [Steven Cook](#)

**About:** Steven serves as of counsel at Bracewell where he advises clients on matters involving environmental and natural resources law and policy. Prior to joining Bracewell, Steven served as deputy assistant administrator at the Office of Land and Emergency Management (OLEM) of the EPA.

**Company:** [Bracewell](#)

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## Episode Highlights

[17:30] **Workforce Training:** Workforce training programs in rural communities can serve as a pipeline of people ready to restore abandoned mine lands and install flood mitigation and green energy resources, especially in times of disaster, among other things.

[27:06] **Role of the Private Sector in Environmental Justice:** To make progress in communities that have historically been mistreated or marginalized, everyone has to have a seat at the table, including members of the private sector.

[34:58] **Environmental Justice at EPA:** The people who make up the Environmental Justice and Civil Rights Program at the EPA have always worked to advance equity, justice and environmental protection for environmentally overburdened and vulnerable communities.

[39:07] **Making Environmental Progress Regardless of Administrations:** Showing up and taking initiative are necessary to keep making progress.

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