



## **The Community Relations Service and Environmental Justice**

The U.S. Department of Justice's Community Relations Service (CRS), is a specialized Federal mediation and conciliation service available to community leaders, organizations, and state and local officials to help resolve and prevent community tension associated with allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. CRS also works with communities to employ strategies to prevent and respond to alleged violent hate crimes committed on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or disability. Through mediation, conciliation, technical assistance, and training, CRS offers services that can enable community members to participate meaningfully in environmental decision-making that may affect them. The following are examples of these services.

### ***CRS Provides Onsite Conciliation Services, Mediation, and Technical Assistance in Preparation for a Demonstration March in Colorado***

In March 2008, CRS was contacted by American Indian community leaders in response to community tension surrounding the reported mining of sacred sites. Community members organized a protest march and requested CRS' assistance in providing technical assistance in preparing for the demonstration march and to provide onsite conciliation as needed during the events. In addition to the services provided during the march, CRS facilitated a mediation dialogue between American Indian community members and the mining corporation. The impact at closing was positive and resulted in the mining organization's acceptance of documents regarding sacred site concerns.

### ***CRS Provided Technical Assistance and Facilitated a Community Meeting in Response to Community Racial Tensions Surrounding Allegations of Pollution in an African American Community in the Midwest***

In March 2011, CRS conducted an assessment of community tensions surrounding an alleged environmental violation in a town in the Midwest where there were allegations of discrimination relating to pollution experienced by a predominately African American community. Some perceived that a company was directing pollution towards the African American community and that officials charged with responding to the pollution discriminated against the community when addressing the environmental harm. To address tension associated with allegations of discrimination, CRS provided technical assistance in arranging a meeting by preparing logistics, securing a neutral meeting location, and reaching out to community partners. CRS provided conciliation services, which included: (1) facilitating dialogue between community members; and (2) introducing resources to community members, including an introduction to services provided by an attorney with the Environmental Enforcement Section of the Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) of the U.S. Department of Justice.

### ***CRS Facilitates Discussions during Formal Mediation Sessions and Informal Community Dialogue Forums in the Aftermath of an Oil Spill and Hurricane in Louisiana***

CRS services were requested to address alleged environmental justice disparate treatment issues related to an oil spill disaster aftermath recovery effort. Tensions were already heightened in the area due to similar allegations in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. CRS facilitated discussions at separate formal mediation sessions where parties addressed concerns. For example, it was alleged that there was a lack of attention to cleaning of a fresh water fishing area in a predominately African American community. In addition, CRS conducted a community dialogue forum between African American community members, law enforcement officials, and city officials. The forum resulted in a joint agreement by area leaders to receive CRS' "Law Enforcement Mediation (LEMs)" and "Responding to Allegations of Racial Profiling" trainings as a positive step toward improving area police community relations.

CRS has 10 regional offices and 4 field offices across the country. Contact information for CRS offices can be found at: <http://www.justice.gov/crs/>