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**Abstract:**

This article considers environmental justice in the specific context of renewable energy goals. As a key component of sustainable development and a central concern for green economy advocates, renewable energy is uniquely situated on the policy spectrum, tying local communities that host renewable projects to global strategies for curbing unsustainable warming trends. The fact that climate change will disproportionately affect the poorest members of society underscores the importance of sustainable development to environmental justice. Yet, early on, some anticipated the potential for conflict between sustainable development and environmental justice, predicting the broader sustainable development agenda might prove insensitive to environmental justice concerns. And indeed, in the renewable energy context, the broad-stroke compatibility between renewable energy goals and environmental justice may obscure the potential for conflicts in implementation. At the same time, I argue, renewable energy offers unique opportunities both to avoid environmental injustice and to affirmatively advance environmental justice as well.

Part I of the article addresses the role of renewable energy in sustainable development and its potential for advancing environmental justice objectives. With a focus on the U.S. and electricity generation, Part II evaluates environmental justice in the related contexts of renewable energy policy and project development. Environmental justice remains relevant to how energy facilities are sited, but also bears on how “renewable energy” or “clean energy” is defined in law. More broadly, it is proving relevant to issues of exclusion and access to renewable energy benefits, including those associated with a “green economy.” The article concludes by addressing possibilities for enhancing, and avoiding conflicts between, what are, at their most basic, compatible goals: renewable energy expansion for sustainable development and environmental justice.