FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 13, 2026

Contact: Sam Law, FracTracker Alliance
sam.law@fractracker.org

Lake Charles' Loice Malvo, 80, receives national Community Sentinel Award

The founder of Fisherville Environmental Action Now was honored Thursday in New Orleans, the first time the awards have been held in the Gulf South.

LAKE CHARLES, La. — Loice Malvo of Lake Charles was honored Thursday night in New Orleans with a 2026 Community Sentinel Award. The Community Sentinel Award for Environmental Stewardship is a national award, presented since 2015 by FracTracker Alliance and Halt the Harm Network, that honors frontline community leaders in the environmental justice movement who are standing up to extractive industry.

"I just feel like I'm just floating. I feel like I'm in heaven," Malvo said in New Orleans this week. "I never thought that I would ever see this day of being awarded for my work."

Malvo, who is 80, has been fighting dirty and polluting industries in Southwest Louisiana for the last 40 years. She said her grandfather, who had been freed from slavery, came to Lake Charles from Richmond, Virginia in the 1800s and owned 80 acres there. He gave 40 acres to his brother and gave land to build a school in the community.

"My grandfather was one that really helped the people," she said. "And for the love of me, I have that in me."

Malvo said she first got involved in 1983, when a rail car spilled more than 11,000 gallons of perchloroethylene in her community, Fisherville, and a train derailment followed. She saw Debra Ramirez on TV talking about what had happened to their community and got in touch with her.

"We connected and we've been fighting ever since," Malvo said.

Malvo founded Fisherville Environmental Action Now after the derailments. She successfully challenged the rezoning of Rice Mill from residential to industrial and opposed a pipeline near an elementary school. She also fought a proposed duplex on a landfill on St. Mary's Drive, helping residents move to cleaner, safer housing.

"They spill these chemicals and no complete cleanup," she said. "They cared not one bit about us. And the people are dying still and suffering still. I'm going to continue to fight to my last breath."

Debra Ramirez, her friend of more than 40 years, introduced her at the ceremony. "When critical issues came up in our community, Loice got up," Ramirez said. "She didn't hesitate."

In her acceptance speech, Malvo said Fisherville Environmental Action Now is pushing for federal Superfund designation and for air and soil monitoring that residents can verify. "What I am most proud of is the strength of our community," she said. "When we stand together, we refuse to be silent, and we refuse to let outside interests treat our neighborhoods as disposable."

"We have no air monitors. We have no one come to see about us. So we have to see about us," Malvo said. "We have to stand up, come together, and fight back. Because the power is in the people."

Asked what it means that the awards came to the Gulf South, Malvo said: "It means to me that change is happening, that we're coming together and showing compassion and concern about one another and honoring those that are standing up and speaking up and fighting back."

Malvo was one of five people honored this year. The others are:

- Zulene Mayfield of Chester, Pennsylvania, chairperson of Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living
- Eboni Neal Cochran of Louisville, Kentucky, co-director of Rubbertown Emergency ACTion (REACT)
- Qiyam Ansari of Pennsylvania's Mon Valley, executive director of Valley Clean Air Now (Emerging Leader Award)
- Karen Feridun of Berks County, Pennsylvania, co-founder of the Better Path Coalition and No False Climate Solutions PA (Community Choice Award)

This was the first time the Sentinel Awards have been held in the Gulf South. The region has long borne the brunt of pollution and toxic industry. It is also home to leaders who have done the seemingly impossible, defeating some of the largest corporations in the world to protect the health and well-being of their communities.

"The Sentinel Awards are a time to celebrate and lift each other up," said Shannon Smith, executive director of FracTracker Alliance. "Our communities face many challenges in the face of powerful, polluting industries. The Sentinel Awards remind us that when we confront these challenges together, we are all stronger."

The ceremony included music by New Orleans musician Bruce "Sunpie" Barnes and a keynote by Jo Banner of The Descendants Project in Louisiana's St. John the Baptist Parish.

About the awards: Established in 2015, the Community Sentinel Award for Environmental Stewardship honors those who work to stop the harms of the fossil fuel industry on their communities and their environment. The 2026 program is at fractracker.org/sentinels-program.

About FracTracker Alliance: FracTracker Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that maps, analyzes, and communicates the risks of oil, gas, and petrochemical development. To learn more, visit fractracker.org or connect with us @FracTracker.

Photos attached (credit: Sam Law, FracTracker Alliance): Loice Malvo with her 2026 Community Sentinel Award, Nov. 12, 2026, in New Orleans (two photos); and, from left, Loice Malvo, Qiyam Ansari and Eboni Neal Cochran with their awards.

###