

Dec. 1, 2000

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: EPA Statutory and Regulatory Authorities Under Which Environmental Justice Issues May Be Addressed in Permitting

FROM: Gary S. Guzy //signed//
General Counsel
Office of General Counsel (2310A)

TO: Steven A. Herman
Assistant Administrator
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assistance (2201A)

Robert Perciasepe
Assistant Administrator
Office of Air and Radiation (6101A)

Timothy Fields, Jr.
Assistant Administrator
Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (5101)

J. Charles Fox
Assistant Administrator
Office of Water (4101)

This memorandum analyzes a significant number of statutory and regulatory authorities under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act, and the Clean Air Act that the Office of General Counsel believes are available to address environmental justice issues during permitting. The use of EPA's statutory authorities, as discussed herein, may in some cases involve new legal and policy interpretations that could require further Agency regulatory or interpretive action. Although the memorandum presents interpretations of EPA's statutory authority and regulations that we believe are legally permissible, it does not suggest that such actions would be uniformly practical or feasible given policy or resource considerations or that there are not important considerations of legal risk that would need to be evaluated. Nor do we assess the relative priority among these various avenues for addressing environmental justice concerns. We look forward to working with all your offices to explore these matters in greater detail.

I. Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)

RCRA authorizes EPA to regulate the generation, transportation, treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous wastes and the management and disposal of solid waste. EPA issues guidelines and recommendations to State solid waste permitting programs under RCRA sections 1008(a), 4002, or 4004 and may employ this vehicle to address environmental justice concerns. The primary area where environmental justice issues have surfaced, however, is in the permitting of hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facilities (e.g., incinerators, fuel blenders, landfills). Pursuant to RCRA section 3005, EPA is authorized to grant permits to such facilities if they demonstrate compliance with EPA regulations.

Upon application by a State, EPA may authorize a State's hazardous waste program to operate in lieu of the Federal program, and to issue and enforce permits. The State's program must be equivalent to the Federal program to obtain and retain authorization. When EPA adopts more stringent RCRA regulations (including permit requirements), authorized States are required to revise their programs within one year after the change in the Federal program or within two years if the change will necessitate a State statutory amendment. 40 CFR § 271.21(e). EPA and most authorized States have so-called "permit shield" regulations, providing that, once a facility obtains a hazardous waste permit, it generally cannot be compelled to comply with additional requirements during the permit's term.

The scope of EPA's authority to address environmental justice issues in RCRA hazardous waste permits was directly addressed by the Environmental Appeals Board (EAB) in Chemical Waste Management, Inc., 6 E.A.D. 66, 1995 WL 395962 (1995) <<http://www.epa.gov/eab/disk11/cwmii.pdf>> The Board found "that when the Region has a basis to believe that operation of the facility may have a disproportionate impact on a minority or low-income segment of the affected community, the Region should, as a matter of policy, exercise its discretion to assure early and ongoing opportunities for public involvement in the permitting process." Id. at 73. It also found that RCRA allows the Agency to "tak[e] a more refined look at its health and environmental impacts assessment in light of allegations that operation of the facility would have a disproportionately adverse effect on the health or environment of low-income or minority populations." Id. at 74. Such a close evaluation could, in turn, justify permit conditions or denials based on disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, while "a broad analysis might mask the effects of the facility on a disparately affected minority or low-income segment of the community." Id. However, while acknowledging the relevance of disparities in health and environmental impacts, the Board also cautioned that "there is no legal basis for rejecting a RCRA permit application based solely upon alleged social or economic impacts upon the community." Id. at 73.

Consistent with this interpretation, there are several RCRA authorities under which EPA could address environmental justice issues in permitting:

A. **Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage and Disposal**

1. RCRA section 3005(c)(3) provides that "[e]ach permit issued under this section shall contain such terms and conditions as the Administrator (or the State) determines necessary to protect human health and the environment." EPA has interpreted this provision to authorize denial of a permit to a facility if EPA determines that operation of the facility would pose an unacceptable risk to human health and the environment and that there are no additional permit terms or conditions that would address such risk. This "omnibus" authority may be applicable on a permit-by-permit basis where appropriate to address the following health concerns in connection with hazardous waste management facilities that may affect low-income communities or minority communities:
 - a. Cumulative risks due to exposure from pollution sources in addition to the applicant facility;
 - b. Unique exposure pathways and scenarios (e.g., subsistence fishers, farming communities); or
 - c. Sensitive populations (e.g., children with levels of lead in their blood, individuals with poor diets).
2. RCRA section 3013 provides that if the Administrator determines that "the presence of any hazardous waste at a facility or site at which hazardous waste is, or has been, stored, treated, or disposed of, or the release of any such waste from such facility or site may present a substantial hazard to human health or the environment," she may order a facility owner or operator to conduct reasonable monitoring, testing, analysis, and reporting to ascertain the nature and extent of such hazard. EPA may require a permittee or an applicant to submit information to establish permit conditions necessary to protect human health and the environment. 40 CFR § 270.10(k). In appropriate circumstances, EPA could use the authority under section 3013 or 40 CFR § 270.10(k) to compel a facility owner or operator to carry out necessary studies, so that, pursuant to the "omnibus" authority, EPA can establish permit terms or conditions necessary to protect human health and the environment.
3. RCRA provides EPA with authority to consider environmental justice issues in establishing priorities for facilities under RCRA section 3005(e), and for facilities engaged in cleaning up contaminated areas under the RCRA corrective action program, RCRA sections 3004(u), 3004(v), and 3008(h). For example, EPA could consider factors such as cumulative risk, unique exposure pathways, or sensitive populations in establishing permitting or clean-up priorities.
4. EPA adopted the "RCRA Expanded Public Participation" rule on December 11, 1995. See 60 Fed. Reg. 63417. RCRA authorizes EPA to explore further whether the RCRA

permit public participation process could better address environmental justice concerns by expanding public participation in the permitting process (including at hazardous waste management facilities to be located in or near low-income communities or minority communities).

5. In expanding the public participation procedures applicable to RCRA facilities, EPA also would have authority to expand the application of those procedures to the permitting of: (a) publicly owned treatment works, which are regulated under the Clean Water Act; (b) underground injection wells, which are regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act; and (c) ocean disposal barges or vessels, which are regulated under the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act. These facilities are subject to RCRA's permit by rule regulations, 40 CFR § 270.60, and are deemed to have a RCRA permit if they meet certain conditions set out in the regulations. 40 CFR § 270.60.
6. EPA's review of State-issued permits provides additional opportunities for consideration of environmental justice concerns. Where the process for a State-issued permit does not adequately address sensitive population risks or other factors in violation of the authorized State program, under the regulations EPA could provide comments on these factors (in appropriate cases) during the comment period on the State's proposed permit on a facility-by-facility basis. 40 CFR § 271.19(a). Where the State itself is authorized for RCRA "omnibus" authority and does not address factors identified in EPA comments as necessary to protect human health and the environment, EPA may seek to enforce the authorized State program requirement. 40 CFR § 271.19(e). Alternatively, if the State is not authorized for "omnibus" authority, EPA may superimpose any necessary additional conditions under the "omnibus" authority in the federal portion of the permit. These conditions become part of the facility's RCRA permit and are enforceable by the United States under RCRA section 3008 and citizens through RCRA section 7002.
7. RCRA section 3019 provides EPA with authority to increase requirements for applicants for land disposal permits to provide exposure information and to request that the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry conduct health assessments at such land disposal facilities.
8. RCRA section 3004(o)(7) provides EPA with authority to issue location standards as necessary to protect human health and the environment. Using this authority, EPA could, for example, establish minimum buffer zones between hazardous waste management facilities and sensitive areas (e.g., schools, areas already with several hazardous waste management facilities, residential areas). Facilities seeking permits would need to comply with these requirements to receive a permit.
9. RCRA-permitted facilities are required under RCRA section 3004(a) to maintain "contingency plans for effective action to minimize unanticipated damage from any treatment, storage, or disposal of . . . hazardous waste." Under this authority, EPA could require facilities to prepare and/or modify their contingency plans to reflect the needs of

environmental justice communities that have limited resources to prepare and/or respond to emergency situations.

10. RCRA additionally provides EPA with authority to amend its regulations to incorporate some of the options described in 1 through 6 above so they become part of the more stringent federal program that authorized States must adopt.

II. Clean Water Act (CWA)

The CWA was adopted "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." To achieve this goal, Congress prohibited the discharge from a point source of any pollutant into a water of the United States unless that discharge complies with specific requirements of the Act. Compliance is achieved by obtaining and adhering to the terms of an NPDES permit issued by EPA or an authorized State pursuant to section 402, or a dredge and fill permit issued by the Army Corps of Engineers or an authorized State pursuant to section 404.

NPDES permits must contain: (1) technology-based limitations that reflect the pollution reduction achieved through particular equipment or process changes, without reference to the effect on the receiving water and (2) where necessary, more stringent limitations representing that level of control necessary to ensure that the receiving waters achieve water quality standards. Water quality standards consist of (1) designated uses of the water (e.g., public water supply, propagation of fish, or recreation); (2) criteria to protect those uses including criteria based on protecting human health and aquatic life; and (3) an antidegradation policy. EPA requires that States designate all waters for "fishable/swimmable" uses unless such uses are not attainable. EPA issues water quality criteria guidance to the States pursuant to CWA section 304(a).

Permits issued under CWA section 404 authorize the discharge of "dredged or fill material" to waters of the United States. The types of activities regulated under section 404 include filling of wetlands to create dry land for development, construction of berms or dams to create water impoundments, and discharges of material dredged from waterways to maintain or improve navigation. Section 404 permits issued by the Corps of Engineers must satisfy two sets of standards: the Corps' "public interest review" and the section 404(b)(1) guidelines promulgated by EPA. The public interest review is a balancing test that requires the Corps to consider a number of factors, including economics, fish and wildlife values, safety, food and fiber production and, public needs and welfare in general. 33 CFR § 320.4(a). The section 404(b)(1) guidelines provide that no permit shall issue if: (1) there are practicable, environmentally less damaging alternatives, (2) the discharge would violate water quality standards or jeopardize threatened or endangered species, (3) the discharge would cause significant degradation to the aquatic ecosystem, or (4) if all reasonable steps have not been taken to minimize adverse effects of the discharge. 40 CFR § 230.10.

There are several CWA authorities under which EPA could address environmental justice issues in permitting:

A. State Water Quality Standards

States are required to review their water quality standards every three years and to submit the results of their review to EPA. CWA section 303(c)(1). EPA Regional offices must approve or disapprove all new or revised State water quality standards pursuant to section 303(c)(3). EPA will approve State standards if they are scientifically defensible and protective of designated uses. 40 CFR § 131.11. If a State does not revise a disapproved standard, EPA is required to propose and promulgate a revised standard for the State. Section 303(c)(4)(A). The Administrator is also required to propose and promulgate a new or revised standard for a State whenever she determines that such a standard is necessary to meet the requirements of the Act and the State does not act to adopt an appropriate standard. CWA section 303(c)(4)(B).

1. State water quality standards currently are required to provide for the protection of "existing uses." 40 CFR § 131.12(a)(1). These are defined as uses actually attained in the water body on or after November 28, 1975. 40 CFR § 131.3(e). To the extent that minority or low-income populations are, or at any time since 1975 have been, using the waters for recreational or subsistence fishing, EPA could reinterpret the current regulations to require that such uses, if actually attained, must be maintained and protected. The CWA provides EPA with authority to require, through appropriate means, that high rates of fish consumption by these populations be considered an "existing use" to be protected by State water quality standards. Under the current regulations, existing uses cannot be removed.
2. EPA regulations provide that all waters must be designated for the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife and for recreation in and on the water ("fishable/swimmable") unless the State documents to EPA's satisfaction that such uses are not attainable. 40 CFR §§ 131.6(a), 131.10(j).

EPA interprets "fishable" uses under section 101(a) of the CWA to include, at a minimum, designated uses providing for the protection of aquatic communities and human health related to consumption of fish and shellfish. In other words, EPA views "fishable" to mean that not only can fish and shellfish thrive in a waterbody, but when caught, can also be safely eaten by humans (stated in 10/24/00 "Dear Colleague" letter from Geoffrey H. Grubbs, Director Office of Science and Technology, and Robert H. Wayland, III, Director Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds). Therefore, EPA currently recommends that in setting criteria to protect "fishable" uses, that the State/Tribe adjust the fish consumption values used to develop criteria to protect the "fishable" use, including fish consumption by subsistence fishers (USEPA 2000, Methodology

for Deriving Ambient Water Quality Criteria for the Protection of Human Health, EPA-822-B-00-004, Chapter 2.1). For example, in deriving such criteria, states or tribes could select their fish consumption value based on site-specific information or a national default value for subsistence fishing (Chapter 4).

In the future, EPA could reinterpret its regulations to mean that any human health use must have a criterion that would protect consumption by subsistence fishers unless there is a showing that water is not used for subsistence fishing.

3. The CWA provides EPA with authority to recommend that State CWA section 303(c)(1) triennial reviews of water quality standards consider the extent to which State criteria provide for protection of human health where there exists subsistence fishing. EPA Regional offices may disapprove a criterion that does not provide protection to highly-exposed populations. The Administrator further has the discretionary authority to determine that such criteria are necessary to meet the requirements of the CWA and then must promptly propose and promulgate such criteria.
4. Consistent with CWA section 101(e), EPA could encourage States to improve public participation processes in the development of State water quality standards through greater outreach and by translating notices for limited English speaking populations consistent with Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice.

B. Issuance of NPDES Permits

1. Assuming EPA adopts the interpretation described in paragraph A.1., above, NPDES permits issued for discharge to waters where a high level of fish consumption is an "existing use" should contain limitations appropriate to protect that use. The CWA provides EPA authority to take this approach when it issues NPDES permits in States not authorized to run the NPDES program, and to object to or ultimately veto State-issued permits that are not based on these considerations. CWA section 402(d).
2. Consistent with CWA section 101(e), where EPA issues NPDES permits, environmental justice concerns can also be taken into account in setting permitting priorities and improving public participation in the permitting process (greater outreach to minority communities and low-income communities including translating notices for limited English speaking populations consistent with Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice).
3. CWA section 302 authorizes EPA to propose and adopt effluent limitations for one or more point sources if the applicable technology-based or water quality-based requirements will not assure protection of public health and other concerns. This determination requires findings of economic capability and a reasonable relationship between costs and benefits. The Agency has never used this authority, but could evaluate whether this authority could be used with respect to pollutants of concern to minorities or

low-income communities. Prior to adopting such limitations by regulation, EPA could use its authority under CWA section 402(a)(1) to incorporate such limitations in specific NPDES permits issued by EPA. The Clean Water Act does not appear to provide any general authority to impose conditions on or deny permits based on environmental justice considerations that are unconnected to water quality impacts or technology-based limitations.

4. Pursuant to CWA section 104 and other authorities, EPA may provide technical assistance to Indian Tribes, where appropriate, in the development of water quality standards and the issuance of NPDES permits.

C. CWA Section 404

1. The broadest potential authority to consider environmental justice concerns in the CWA section 404 program rests with the Corps of Engineers, which conducts a broad "public interest review" in determining whether to issue a section 404 permit. In evaluating the "probable impacts . . . of the proposed activity and its intended use on the public interest," the Corps is authorized to consider, among other things, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, safety, and the needs and welfare of the people. 33 CFR § 320.4(a). This public interest review could include environmental justice concerns.
2. EPA has discretionary oversight authority over the Corps' administration of the section 404 program (i.e., EPA comments on permit applications, can elevate Corps permit decisions to the Washington, D.C. level, and can "veto" Corps permit decisions under section 404(c) that would have an unacceptable adverse effect on "municipal water supplies, shellfish beds and fishery areas, wildlife, or recreational areas"). The CWA thus authorizes EPA to use these authorities to prevent degradation of these public resources that may have a disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effect on a minority community or low-income community. Such effects can be addressed when they result directly from a discharge of dredged or fill material (e.g., the filling of a waterbody), or are the indirect result of the permitted activity (e.g., the fill will allow construction of an industrial facility that will cause water pollution due to runoff).

III. Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA)

The SDWA includes two separate regulatory programs. The Public Water Supply program establishes requirements for the quality of drinking water supplied by public water systems. This program contains no federal permitting. The Underground Injection Control (UIC) program establishes controls on the underground injection of fluids to protect underground sources of drinking water.

Under the UIC program, the Administrator must establish requirements for State UIC programs that will prevent the endangerment of drinking water sources by underground injection.

EPA has promulgated a series of such requirements beginning in 1980. The SDWA also provides that States may apply to EPA for primary responsibility to administer the UIC program. EPA must establish a UIC permitting program in States that do not seek this responsibility or that fail to meet the minimum requirements established by EPA.

There are several SDWA authorities under which EPA could address environmental justice issues in UIC permitting:

A. EPA-issued Permits

Underground injection must be authorized by permit or rule. The SDWA provides that EPA can deny or establish permit limits where such injection may “endanger” public health. “Endangerment” is defined to include any injection that may result in the presence of a contaminant in a drinking water supply that “may...adversely affect the health of persons.” 40 CFR § 144.52(b)(1). As a result, in those States where EPA issues permits and an injection activity poses a special health risk to minority or low-income populations, the SDWA provides EPA with authority to establish special permit requirements to address the endangerment or deny the permit if the endangerment cannot otherwise be eliminated. As in its Chemical Waste Management RCRA permit appeal decision discussed in Part I above, the EAB has addressed EPA’s authority to expand public participation and to consider disproportionate impacts in the UIC permitting program. Envotech, 6 E.A.D. 260, 281, 1996 WL 66307 (1996) <<http://www.epa.gov/eab/disk10/envotech.pdf>>.

B. Pending regulatory action

The Office of Water is currently revising the regulations under this program governing "Class V" injection wells (i.e., shallow wells where nonhazardous waste is injected). In determining which wells to regulate and the standards for those where EPA determines regulations are necessary to prevent "endangerment," the SDWA provides EPA with authority to take into account environmental justice issues such as cumulative risk and sensitive populations.

C. Other regulatory actions

Likewise, the SDWA provides EPA with authority to address environmental justice issues related to potential endangerment of drinking water supplies by injection for all types of wells. For example, EPA could revise its regulatory requirements for siting Class 1 (hazardous waste) wells to address cumulative risk and other risk-related environmental justice issues.

IV. Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA)

The MPRSA, commonly known as the Ocean Dumping Act, 33 USC § 1401 ff., establishes a permitting program that covers the dumping of material into ocean waters. The ocean disposal of a variety of materials, including sewage sludge, industrial waste, chemical and biological warfare agents, and high level radioactive waste, is expressly prohibited.

EPA issues permits for the dumping of all material other than dredged material. 33 U.S.C. § 1412(a). The Army Corps of Engineers issues permits for the dumping of dredged material, subject to EPA review and concurrence. 33 U.S.C. § 1413(a). (As a practical matter, EPA issues very few ocean dumping permits because the vast majority of material disposed of at sea is dredged material.) EPA also is charged with designating sites at which permitted disposal may take place; these sites are to be located wherever feasible beyond the edge of the Continental Shelf. 33 U.S.C. § 1412(c)(1).

When issuing MPRSA permits and designating ocean dumping sites, EPA is to determine whether the proposed dumping will "unreasonably degrade or endanger human health, welfare, amenities, or the marine environment, ecological systems, or economic potentialities." 33 USC § 1412(a), (c)(1). EPA also is to take into account "the effect of... dumping on human health and welfare, including economic, esthetic, and recreational values." 33 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(B), (c)(1). Thus, in permitting and site designation, EPA has ample authority to consider such factors as impacts on minority or low-income communities and on subsistence consumers of sea food that would result from the proposed dumping. In addition, the MPRSA provides specifically that EPA is to consider land-based alternatives to ocean dumping and the probable impact of requiring use of these alternatives "upon considerations affecting the public interest." 33 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(G). This authorizes EPA to take impacts on minority populations or low-income populations into account in evaluating alternative locations and methods of disposal of the material that is proposed to be dumped at sea.

V. Clean Air Act (CAA)

There are several CAA authorities under which EPA could address environmental justice issues in permitting:

A. New Source Review (NSR)

NSR is a preconstruction permitting program. If new construction or making a major modification will increase emissions by an amount large enough to trigger NSR requirements, then the source must obtain a permit before it can begin construction. The NSR provisions are set forth in sections 110(a)(2)(C), 165(a) (PSD permits), 172(c)(5) and 173 (NSR permits) of the Clean Air Act.

Under the Clean Air Act, states have primary responsibility for issuing permits, and they can customize their NSR programs within the limits of EPA regulations. EPA's role is to

approve State programs, to review, comment on, and take any other necessary actions on draft permits, and to assure consistency with EPA's rules, the state's implementation plan, and the Clean Air Act. Citizens also play a role in the permitting decision, and must be afforded an opportunity to comment on each construction permit before it is issued.

The NSR permit program for major sources has two different components—one for areas where the air is dirty or unhealthy, and the other for areas where the air is cleaner. Under the Clean Air Act, geographic areas (e.g., counties or metropolitan statistical areas) are designated as “attainment” or “nonattainment” with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)—the air quality standards which are set to protect human health and the environment. Permits for sources located in attainment (or unclassifiable) areas are called Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permits and those for sources located in nonattainment areas are called NSR permits.

A major difference in the two programs is that the control technology requirement is more stringent in nonattainment areas and is called the Lowest Achievable Emission Rate (LAER). On the other hand, in attainment or PSD areas, a source must apply Best Available Control Technology (BACT) and the statute allows the consideration of cost in weighing BACT options. Also, in keeping with the goal of progress toward attaining the national air quality standards, sources in nonattainment areas must always provide or purchase “offsets”—decreases in emissions which compensate for the increases from the new source or modification. In attainment areas, PSD sources typically do not need to obtain offsets. However, PSD does require an air quality modeling analysis of pollution that exceeds allowable levels; this impact must be mitigated. Sometimes, these mitigation measures can include offsets in PSD areas.

1. Under the Clean Air Act, section 173(a)(5) provides that a nonattainment NSR permit may be issued only if: "an analysis of alternative sites, sizes, production processes, and environmental control techniques for such proposed source demonstrates that benefits of the proposed source significantly outweigh the environmental and social costs imposed as a result of its location, construction, or modification." For example, this provision authorizes consideration of siting issues. Section 165(a)(2) provides that a PSD permit may be issued only after an opportunity for a public hearing at which the public can appear and provide comment on the proposed source, including "alternatives thereto" and "other appropriate considerations." This authority could allow EPA to take action to address the proper role of environmental justice considerations in PSD/NSR permitting.
2. In addition to these statutory provisions, EPA directly issues PSD/NSR permits in certain situations (e.g., in Indian country and Outer Continental Shelf areas) and, through the EAB, adjudicates appeals of PSD permits issued by States and local districts with delegated federal programs. In such permit and appeal decisions, it is possible to consider environmental justice issues on a case-by-case basis, without waiting to issue a generally applicable rule or guidance document. EPA already considers environmental

justice issues on a case-by-case basis in issuing PSD permits consistent with its legal authority.

3. The EPA Environmental Appeals Board (EAB) has addressed environmental justice issues in connection with PSD permit appeals on several occasions. The EAB first addressed environmental justice issues under the CAA in the original decision in Genessee Power (September 8, 1993). In that decision the EAB stated that the CAA did not allow for consideration of environmental justice and siting issues in air permitting decisions. In response, the Office of General Counsel filed a motion for clarification on behalf of the Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) and Region V. OGC pointed out, among other things, that the CAA requirement to consider alternatives to the proposed source, and the broad statutory definition of “best available control technology” (BACT), provided ample opportunity for consideration of environmental justice in PSD permitting. In an amended opinion and order issued on October 22, 1993, the EAB deleted the controversial language but did not decide whether it is permissible to address environmental justice concerns under the PSD program. 4 E.A.D. 832, 1993 WL 484880, <<http://www.epa.gov/eab/disk4/genessee.pdf>>. However, in subsequent decisions, Ecoeléctrica, 7 E.A.D. 56, 1997 WL 160751 (1997) <<http://www.epa.gov/eab/disk11/ecoelect.pdf>>, and Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority, 6 E.A.D. 253, 1995 WL 794466 (1995) <<http://www.epa.gov/eab/disk9/prepa.pdf>>, the EAB stated that notwithstanding the lack of formal rules or guidance on environmental justice, EPA could address environmental justice issues. In 1999 in Knauf Fiber Glass, 8 E.A.D. PSD Appeal Nos. 98-3 through 98-20, 1999 WL 64235 (Feb. 4, 1999) <<http://www.epa.gov/eab/disk11/knauf.pdf>>, the EAB remanded a PSD permit to the delegated permitting authority (the Shasta County Air Quality Management District) for failure to provide an environmental justice analysis in the administrative record in response to comments raising the issue.
4. In the 1990 CAA Amendments, Congress provided that the PSD provisions of the Act do not apply to hazardous air pollutants (HAPs), see CAA section 112(b)(6), so the role of hazardous air pollutant impacts as environmental justice issues in PSD permitting is not straightforward. Thus, BACT limits are not required to be set for HAPs in PSD permits. However, the Administrator ruled prior to the 1990 Amendments that in establishing BACT for criteria pollutants, alternative technologies for criteria pollutants could be analyzed based on their relative ability to control emissions of pollutants not directly regulated under PSD. EPA believes that the 1990 Amendments did not change this limited authority, and EPA believes it could be a basis for addressing environmental justice concerns. In addition, EPA may have authority to take into account – and to require States to do so in their PSD permitting – effects of HAPs that are also criteria pollutants, such as VOCs.

B. Title V

Title V of the CAA requires operating permits for stationary sources of air pollutants and prescribes public participation procedures for the issuance, significant modification, and renewal of Title V operating permits. Unlike PSD/NSR permitting, Title V generally does not impose substantive emission control requirements, but rather requires all applicable requirements to be included in the Title V operating permit. Other permitting programs may co-exist under the authority of the CAA, such as those in State implementation plans (SIPs) approved by EPA.

1. Because Title V does not directly impose substantive emission control requirements, it is not clear whether or how EPA could take environmental justice issues into account in Title V permitting – other than to allow public participation to serve as a motivating factor for applying closer scrutiny to a Title V permit’s compliance with applicable CAA requirements. EPA believes, however, that in this indirect way, Title V can, by providing significant public participation opportunities, serve as a vehicle by which citizens can address environmental justice concerns that arise under other provisions of the CAA.
2. Under the 40 CFR Part 70/71 permitting process, EPA has exercised its CAA authority to require extensive opportunities for public participation in permitting actions. State permitting authorities also have the flexibility to provide additional public participation.
3. Other permitting processes under the CAA such as SIP permitting programs can include appropriate public participation measures, and these can be used to promote consideration of environmental justice issues. For example, EPA regulations require that “minor NSR programs” in SIPs provide an opportunity for public comment prior to issuance of a permit (40 CFR § 51.161(b)(2)). (Note, however, that many state programs do not at present meet this requirement.)

C. Solid Waste Incinerator Siting Requirements

The CAA provides specific authority to EPA to establish siting requirements for solid waste incinerators that could include consideration of environmental justice issues. CAA section 129(a)(3) provides that standards for new solid waste incinerators include "siting requirements that minimize, on a site specific basis, to the maximum extent practicable, potential risks to public health or the environment." These would be applicable requirements for Title V purposes. The new source performance standards (NSPS) for large municipal waste combustors (40 CFR part 60, subpart Eb) and hospital/medical/infectious waste incinerators (40 CFR part 60, subpart Ec) both currently contain such requirements. In the large municipal waste combustor NSPS, the specific requirement in section 129(a)(3) was incorporated and requirements for public notice, a public meeting and consideration of and response to public comments were added. However, to reduce the burden on the much smaller entities which typically own and operate hospital/medical/infectious waste incinerators, that NSPS only incorporates the specific section 129(a)(3) requirement. EPA is subject to a court ordered deadline for

taking final action on NSPS for commercial/industrial waste incinerators, and has proposed to follow the approach to the siting analysis adopted in the hospital/medical/infectious waste NSPS in that rule.

D. 40 CFR Part 71 Tribal Air Rule

The Part 71 federal operating permit rule establishes EPA's Title V operating permits program in Indian country. Where sources are operating within Indian country, and Tribes do not seek authorization to implement Title V programs, the Part 71 rule clarifies that EPA will continue to implement federal operating permit programs. These Title V permit programs are limited to Title V and other applicable federal CAA requirements and are not comprehensive air pollution control programs. Thus, the opportunities for addressing environmental justice issues may be similar to those discussed in section B above.

cc: Michael McCabe
Barry Hill
Lisa Friedman
Susan Lepow
Alan Eckert
James Nelson

JCNELSON:jcn/jj:2322A:202-564-5532:12/01/00:f:\...files\ccid\ejpermittingauthoritiesfinal1200.wpd