



FISCAL YEAR 2015 ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRESS REPORT

September 2016



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Clean water and clean air don't just happen, especially in low-income and minority communities. These are essential resources that we have to invest in protecting and that includes communities, cities, states and tribes.

This problem isn't easy. We won't fix it overnight. It's only when we work together that we will be able to deliver these basic protections to every American, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they make. Everyone deserves to have their health protected from environmental exposures.

~ EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy ~

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PREFACE

Protecting human health and the environment is at the heart of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) mission. Towards that end, the agency has been working hard over the course of the past year to make a visible difference in overburdened communities. EPA's *Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 Annual Environmental Justice (EJ) Progress Report* highlights our collaboration with the communities we serve, our government partners, and all other interested stakeholders to move communities from surviving to self-sustaining and economically thriving. Since 2011, the [Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898](#), signed by President Obama, has directed agencies to "periodically review and update EJ strategies and ... provide a concise report on progress during the previous fiscal year."

In 2015, EPA sharpened its focus on environmental justice and empowered communities to protect themselves because not everyone has shared fully in the benefits of environmental protection. Low-income and minority communities have too often been left behind to face disproportionate levels of pollution without resources to address it. We're taking the lessons we learn from working with these communities and applying them to our work across the country.

EPA works with all stakeholders to constructively and collaboratively address environmental and public health concerns in minority, low-income, tribal, and other vulnerable communities. The Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) facilitates these efforts by coordinating agency efforts to integrate environmental justice into all policies, programs, and activities.

In addition to OEJ, every EPA regional office has an environmental justice coordinator who serves as a focal point within that office. This network provides outreach and educational opportunities to external, as well as internal, individuals, and organizations.

This past year, EPA continued to expand the work it does to ensure clean air, clean water, healthy land, and a stable climate. We launched EJSCREEN to help place tools in people's hands at the community-level which helps them visualize pollution burden. The agency hosted more than 200 public events along with training and webinars to get feedback, which will be used to develop the next version of EJSCREEN.

Strengthening partnerships and building collaborative efforts were a cornerstone of addressing environmental justice concerns in 2015. This progress report lays out EPA's work to ensure the protection of basic fundamental rights and they are organized in the following areas:

- Providing extra assistance to the most vulnerable, overburdened, and underserved communities
- Supporting collaborative projects
- Increasing community engagement
- Sharing data and mapping tools and resources, and
- Building internal capacity through policy and training

This progress report offers an opportunity for EPA to reflect on the ongoing mission of advancing environmental justice principles as required by Executive Order 12898. It also reflects progress with the acknowledgment that we will continue to focus on long term solutions. EPA will continue to implement an aggressive strategy to improve the environment and public health in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental harms and deprived of critical resources.



EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy addressing IWG Senior Leaders at 2015 IWG Principals Meeting

HELPING COMMUNITIES MOVE FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

EPA understands that partnering with and supporting communities is an important way to achieve our common goal of addressing environmental injustice. A few mechanisms that EPA used to accomplish this in 2015 included issuing grants, promoting equitable development activities, engaging in community and tribal outreach, and in the meeting commitments outlined in Plan EJ 2014. Through these tools, this section highlights how EPA is helping communities move from surviving to thriving.

Grants

Many communities are struggling to address blighted and contaminated property, the Brownfields grant program is one avenue to address urban and rural development challenges in underserved communities. EPA's [Brownfields Program](#) provides grants and technical assistance to communities, states, tribes, and others to assess, safely clean up and sustainably reuse properties that may have hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants present. Cleaning up and reinvesting in brownfields protects human health and the environment, reduces blight, and takes development pressures off greenspaces and working lands.

Lower Brule Sioux Tribe

The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, population 1,664, will use its \$200,000 cleanup grant to remove contamination from the Former Housing Authority Building located in the middle of town and directly adjacent to an elementary school. Addressing contamination of the deteriorating building will enhance the environmental and public welfare of the resident and provide other direct community benefits by allowing the tribe to relocate their local Boys & Girls Club.



Palatka, Florida

The small city of Palatka, Florida for example, was declared an emergency area following the devastation of two tropical storms, and has also suffered economically from the closing of Georgia-Pacific paper towel manufacturing line and the lay-off of 130 employees from the regional water management company. Being selected for a \$400,000 assessment grant will allow this town of just over 10,000 residents to support their downtown and riverfront redevelopment plans and help restore the local economy.

In 2015, EPA awarded 243 Brownfields grants, totaling \$54.3 million, to 147 communities. These funds assist communities and businesses in returning economic stability to underserved and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods through the assessment and cleanup of abandoned industrial and commercial properties. This latest funding advances EPA's broader commitment to making a visible difference in communities which focuses on better coordinating federal investments to help environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed communities address local priorities.

EPA's grant awards support both urban and rural communities in their efforts to address their brownfields concerns. More than fifty-five percent of the communities selected to receive an award were cities and towns with populations of 100,000 or less. Forty-four percent of these recipients, were very small rural communities with populations of 10,000 or less.

The [Urban Waters Federal Partnership](#) aims to stimulate regional and local economies, create local jobs, improve quality of life, and protect the health of Americans by revitalizing urban waterways in under-served communities across the country. This partnership reconnects urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and

collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to not only improve our nation's water systems but also promote their economic, environmental, and social benefits. This partnership aligns with President Obama's [America's Great Outdoors Initiative](#), which calls on agencies to support innovative community efforts to provide safe, healthy and accessible outdoor spaces. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership aims to achieve the following:

- Break down federal program silos to promote more effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership by engaging and serving community partners.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area resources and stimulate local economies to create local jobs.
- Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action.

Two examples of how Urban Waters grants have supported underserved, overburdened communities occurred in the New Orleans, Louisiana and South Wilmington, Delaware.

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Groundwork New Orleans</p> <p><i>Two EPA grant projects are helping vulnerable post-Katrina neighborhoods revitalize and build resiliency. With the help of an EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant, Groundwork New Orleans is improving stormwater management in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward. Also an EPA Urban Waters grantee, Groundwork NOLA is educating and connecting community members to the restoration of Bayou Bienvenue, a former cypress-tupelo tree wetland that formed a natural barrier against storms. Residents, Groundwork, and EPA are working towards not just ecological benefits, but more opportunities for jobs, recreation, and healing these underserved communities.</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Clean Air Council Support Environmental Justice for South Wilmington, Delaware</p> <p><i>With support from an Urban Waters Small Grant, the Clean Air Council (CAC) is incorporating community priorities into plans to revitalize four brownfields in South Wilmington, DE. CAC went door-to-door to educate residents on green infrastructure and how flooding affects their neighborhood. They used a workbook with ideas for how to change brownfields and address the flooding. CAC will soon host a series of workshops to gather feedback on design alternatives that will incorporate other community priorities, like creating more social and community spaces, into the design.</i></p> |
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EPA's EJ Small Grants Program (EJSG) supports and empowers communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues. The program assists recipients in building collaborative partnerships to help them understand and address environmental and public health concerns in their communities. In 2015, 44 recipients received \$1,200,000 in grant funding. Since its inception in 1994, the EJSG Program has funded more than 1,400 projects supporting the efforts of underserved, low-income, minority and tribal communities. Through EJSG, communities have tackled a wide range of issues including: poor air quality, illegal dumping or poor waste management practices, remediating poor housing stock, childhood asthma to name a few.

Keep Growing Detroit: Detroit City Soils

Healthy urban soils play a critical role in building communities that are food secure and climate resilient. Funded at \$25,100, this project will educate urban growers about the importance of soil and the preventive and precautionary measures of dealing with lead in soil, as well as demonstrate the positive impact that urban agriculture has on soil quality. Project goals are: 60 site visits, 135 soil samples, 352 yards of compost distributed, 50 raised bed gardens built, 10 workshops with 230 residents educated, and 75 gardeners trained on the importance of soil testing, how to take a soil test, and how to interpret results.

EPA EJ Small Grant Will Stimulate Urban Gardening on Baltimore Vacant Lots

BALTIMORE – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency dedicated \$22,000 environmental justice grant to the Parks and People Foundation in Baltimore to help educate residents about safe ways to create urban gardens on vacant properties throughout the city.

The funding from EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants Program includes money that has already been spent to train 12 high school students how to collect soil samples from vacant lots designated for urban gardens and edible produce. The students will also set up workshops and conduct hands-on training to residents at various locations.

"This funding will help support ongoing efforts throughout the city of Baltimore to transform vacant properties into productive and sustainable gardens that grow fresh produce," said EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin. "EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grants support activities not only address community concerns, but also educate and empower our youth, the current generation of environmental stewards."

The project initiated by Parks and Produce aims to educate more than 2,000 city residents about the importance of soil and the preventive and precautionary measures of dealing with soil contaminants. Funding also will be used to set up four to six vacant lot demonstration sites to conduct hands-on training in strategies for building productive soil beds.

Furthermore, the Baltimore project seeks to mitigate the impacts of climate change by increasing the area of "green" spaces that will help reduce stormwater runoff.

Equitable Development

To be sensitive to the needs of vulnerable populations, ensuring better understanding of environmental justice issues, applying a lens with [smart growth](#) principles in mind, and considering the benefits of equitable development can be an effective combination of strategies for promoting a clean and safe environment, a strong economy, and improved quality of life. These approaches aim to create communities that are healthy, environmentally sustainable, and economically vibrant and potentially position residents to shape development where they live.

During 2015, EPA hosted a three-part webinar series on equitable development that reached 1,268 participants. EPA also worked with new partners, including the Planning and the Black Community Division of the American Planning Association (APA) and the Planning Webcast Series Consortium. The success of the webinar series has resulted in an increase of more partners seeking additional content from EPA.

EPA also celebrated the selection of State Representative Harold Mitchell Jr., and the ReGenesis Project, a nonprofit group a National Planning Excellence Award. Together they catalyzed the local revitalization of the Arkwright and Forest Park communities of Spartanburg, South Carolina, through toxic waste site clean-up coupled with improved access to healthcare and affordable housing. The nomination was selected by the APA, and the commendation was presented in April 2015. The ReGenesis Project was recognized under the category of "Advancing Diversity and Social Change (in Honor of Paul Davidoff Award)". The award drew national attention to environmental justice and the efforts of the EJ Federal Interagency Working Group (EJ IWG). The award also affirmed the clear connections between EJ and planning in a highly visible manner within a professional sector that manages the built environment.

EPA continues to educate the public through multi-media as well as strategic discussions and forums. In response to the increasing prominence of EJ in the context of sustainability and planning policy, the agency developed a new page for its website which targeted equitable development and environmental justice. The EPA continues to make contributions to developing programmatic content for the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference as well. During 2015, the agency conducted its 2015 Equitable Development Workshop in Baltimore, Maryland and organized eight hours of programmatic offerings for the smart growth conference in Portland, Oregon. Annually, EPA builds on its past experience of addressing issues that target the social pillar of sustainability, and delivers programmatic content that addresses long-standing gaps. The agency is well

positioned to introduce solutions based on more than 24 years of experience in targeting issues at the intersection of social equity and environmental protection.

EJ Plan 2014

Under [Plan EJ 2014](#), EPA laid a foundation for integrating environmental justice in all its programs, including rule writing, permitting, enforcement, science, and law. Over the last four years, Plan EJ 2014 has achieved many significant milestones as we've worked to build EJ into the agency's regulatory practice. Some of those milestones included developing guidance for rule writers, enhancing public participation for EPA-issued permits, building EJ into our enforcement targeting and resolution of enforcement cases, developing EJ Legal Tools, and many others. Through EJ Plan 2014, EPA also revitalized the environmental justice conversation across the federal family, assembled promising practices by working with communities, and initiated the development of a cross-cutting EJ Research Roadmap. All commitments under Plan EJ 2014 were met including preparation of a draft Technical Guidance on Assessing EJ in Regulatory Analysis, development of assessment and mapping tools such as Community-Focused Exposure and Risk Screening Tool (C-FERST)/ Tribal-Focused Exposure and Risk Sustainability Tool (T-FERST), and issuance of a public version of an Environmental Justice mapping tool, EJSCREEN.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES TO EPA RULEMAKING

In the summer of 2015, EPA issued the historic [Clean Power Plan](#) (CPP), one of the largest steps America has ever taken to combat climate change and protect future generations. CPP puts the United States on track to significantly cut carbon pollution from power plants – the nation’s biggest single contributor to climate change. Because greenhouse gas pollution threatens public health and welfare, EPA is using its authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate sources of these pollutants, including in the power sector. Along with the many other actions under President Obama’s leadership, the CPP will translate to major health benefits and cost savings for American families.

The CPP is grounded firmly in science and the law. Science clearly shows that carbon dioxide fuels a changing climate, which in turn poses threats to our health and to the environment that sustains all Americans. CPP is fully consistent with the Clean Air Act, and relies on the same time-tested state-federal partnership that, since 1970, has reduced harmful air pollution by 70 percent, while the US economy has tripled. Additionally, EPA is striving to protect low-income and minority Americans through the Clean Power Plan. We received more than 4.3 million public comments on our draft rule and hosted hundreds of meetings with stakeholders, including vulnerable communities. Through this expansive outreach effort, EPA heard loud and clear the need to ensure that the CPP did not disproportionately impact low-income Americans—and EPA worked with the Department of Energy and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to ensure that’s the case.

Related to the CPP specific to tribal communities, EPA uses the Community and Tribal Program Group (CTPG) which has been involved in planning, organizing, developing, delivering and coordinating numerous outreach activities for environmental justice and tribal communities. These activities have included:

- Face-to-face meetings/trainings/workshops/conferences
- Conference calls
- Webinars
- Listening Sessions
- Public Hearings
- Tribal Consultation Letters

Many low-income, minority, and tribal communities are disproportionately impacted by air pollution and are not able to participate in environmental decisions due to barriers that prevent them from meaningfully engaging in the process. As a result, their voices are often unheard. To help communities become more prepared and involved in this process, the CTPG developed and delivered training on the Clean Air Act, rulemaking and permitting processes, and other relevant areas. The training provided participants an opportunity to:

- Gain a better understanding of the Clean Air Act, Clean Power Plan, Refinery Rule, rulemaking process and the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898;
- Understand the roles of the federal, state, local government and industry in the permitting process;
- Learn how to effectively engage in the permitting process which includes the development of “actionable comments” and participation in public hearings;
- Identify the opportunities for public involvement and options for improving the public involvement process.

As the agency conducted outreach activities and trainings, communities continually expressed their appreciation for these efforts. Many of these communities felt that these outreach efforts helped to build trust and relationships within and outside the federal, state, local, industry, and other agencies. To them, their voices and environmental justice concerns were finally being heard or addressed. The CTPG program provided in-person training to more than 3,000 participants representing various actively involved agencies and organizations including the federal, state, local, and industry.

In addition, the EPA updated air pollution standards to further control toxic air emissions from petroleum refineries. Exposure to toxic air pollutants, such as benzene, can cause respiratory problems and other serious health issues and can increase the risk of developing cancer. The rule requires first-of-its-kind fence line monitoring to better protect and inform nearby communities, while also strengthening emission controls for flares, pressure relief devices, storage tanks, and delayed coker operations that will reduce thousands of tons of hazardous air pollutants.

To quote Gina McCarthy, EPA Administrator, "These updated Clean Air Act standards will lower the cancer risk from petroleum refineries for more than 1.4 million people and are a substantial step forward in EPA's work to protect the health of vulnerable communities located near these facilities. The act requires a healthy environment for all communities, and this rule delivers on EPA's commitment to environmental justice by reducing toxic air pollutants that impact families living near refineries by requiring, for the first time ever in an EPA air rule, monitoring of emissions at the fence line and requiring action be taken if standards are exceeded."

When fully implemented, the rule will result in a reduction of 5,200 tons per year of toxic air pollutants, and 50,000 tons per year of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Also, as a co-benefit of these final standards, EPA projects that these standards will eliminate emissions of greenhouse gases equivalent to approximately 660,000 tons per year of CO₂. These cost-effective steps will have no noticeable impact on the cost of petroleum products at the approximately 150 petroleum refineries around the country.

ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

These projects reflect a wide array of agency and federal resources to help overburdened communities proactively address endemic and emerging environmental challenges in ways that build long-term sustainability internationally, nationally, and regionally.

International

Environmental justice highlights issues such as health, access to safe drinking water, and housing which are at the heart of treaties and laws focused on human rights. At its core, environmental justice is about the intersection of human rights, the environment, and how people can equitably access the resources they need to survive. In 2015, for the second time in nearly five years, the US reported to the United Nations Human Rights Council about its work to provide for human rights in the EPA was a part of the [U.S. Delegation](#) that traveled to Geneva, Switzerland to present information about the ways the United States has been implementing more than

EPA's Making a Visible Difference team for Newport News, VA has partnered with the Southeast Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) Coalition to revitalize and improve the neighborhood. EPA has engaged community members in participatory research to understand and reduce environmental risks and exposures through Office of Research and Development's (ORD) Regional Sustainable Environmental Science research project. Climate resilience and the high incidence of respiratory illness constitute two priority issues identified by the community. Current and expected partners in this collaborative effort include Moton Community House, Sierra Club, City of Newport News, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Old Dominion University, Old Dominion University Research Foundation, All from One Inc., and Project Single Mothers. To capitalize on their environmental awareness outreach strategy, EPA joined Southeast CARE on September 11-12, 2015 in Southeast Newport News to promote asthma awareness, air and water quality, climate change impacts, community resiliency, and organizational partnerships. Having recently developed the Southeast Asthma Network via an EJ Small Grant, the Network partnered with the Sierra Club, Virginia Organizing and the Chesapeake Climate Action Network to foster asthma and air quality awareness by holding an outdoor information session/cookout for community residents.

170 recommendations received from the council during the US's last Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session, held in 2010. The United States [UPR report](#) was submitted to the council in February 2015. For the first time, the report included a section about the environment, which highlights work on addressing the causes and impacts of climate change. During the session, the US delegation also received more than 340 additional recommendations from approximately 120 countries, including recommendations focusing on the need for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, improved farmworker safety, improved water and sanitation services for vulnerable communities, and protection of indigenous lands and sacred sites.

National and Regional

Making a Visible Difference in Communities.

Recognizing that environmental and public health impacts affect people most significantly where they live, EPA identified more than 50 environmentally overburdened, underserved, and economically distressed communities for more focused and coordinated action. EPA's [Making a Visible Difference in Communities](#) initiative involved listening to community leaders and residents to understand their needs and then working with local, state, and other federal partners to leverage our collective resources more effectively in support of local goals. These efforts will help address community environmental and public health challenges in ways that support local economic development, community empowerment, and leverage other federal agency resources. EPA has partnered with nearly 30 federal partners that are engaging with these 50 communities. The following are a couple examples of how this initiative has supported communities that are economically underserved and heavily impacted by pollution exposure.

Along with helping Lawrence, Newport News, and other communities to improve environmental conditions, economic opportunity, and quality of life; lessons learned through this work will be used to improve the support EPA provides to other communities in the future.

Lawrence, Massachusetts is a mill and manufacturing city with one of the highest immigrant (74% Latino) and lowest income (34.3% below poverty) populations in the state. Based on extensive engagement with the community, EPA is helping the city with a number of local priorities, including developing a comprehensive water strategy to protect the Merrimac River, which is its sole source of drinking water and the primary drinking water source for over 600,000 people in the region. With more than \$2.6 million dollars in state and federal Brownfields funding going toward assessment and clean-up, the City and community partners have also undertaken many other city park and redevelopment projects. Other local concerns being addressed include increasing recycling, reducing litter, and providing environmental education and job training to increase employment.

Local Foods, Local Places

Improving access to fresh food, creating walkable neighborhoods, and growing the economy are issues facing many communities. Developing the local food economy is one strategy that can help. Through the [Local Foods, Local Places](#) initiative, EPA has joined with the US Department of Agriculture, Department of Transportation, Centers for Disease Control, Appalachian Regional Commission, and Delta Regional Authority to provide communities with technical support and expertise to help integrate local food systems into downtown redevelopment and economic revitalization efforts. A team of experts in local food systems, economic development, and land use planning work directly with communities to develop specific local food projects, such as farmers markets, food hubs, and community kitchens.

Corbin, Kentucky is an Appalachian community where jobs from two major industries – coal and the railroads – have been on the decline. With help from *Local Foods, Local Places*, Corbin residents, businesses, farmers joined together to implement their vision for a more vibrant downtown that takes advantage of the strong agricultural base. Since it opened, the downtown Corbin farmers market has helped farm-based businesses, local artisans, and musicians grow, and the city’s vacancy rate on Main Street has dropped from 40 percent to 5 percent in just 2 years. Today, businesses are thriving, and Corbin is becoming a place where young people want to, and can, stay.

SHARING DATA AND TOOLS

EPA is developing and has released a number of mapping and data tools to help advance the integration of the science of understanding cumulative exposure, risk, and impact for all stakeholders working on EJ issues. The following tools provide information, strategies, human exposure models, databases, sampling and analytical methods, GIS maps, and web applications to the public that will enhance analysis in support of communities with EJ concerns around the country.

| Tool | Description | Website |
|---|---|---|
| EJSCREEN (EJSCREEN) | An environmental justice mapping and screening tool that provides EPA with a nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and demographic indicators. | https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen |
| Community-Focused Exposure and Risk Screening Tool (C-FERST) | A community mapping, information access tool to help inform community assessments and decision-making | https://www.epa.gov/healthresearch/community-focused-exposure-and-risk-screening-tool-c-ferst |
| Tribal-Focused Environmental Risk and Sustainability Tool (T-FERST) | A web-based information and mapping tool designed to provide tribes with easy access to the best available human health and ecological science. | https://www.epa.gov/healthresearch/tribal-focused-environmental-risk-and-sustainability-tool-t-ferst |
| Community Cumulative Assessment Tool (CCAT) | A computerized, guided process that informs users of the steps involved in a cumulative risk assessment. | Under development |

EJSCREEN

In June 2015, another significant activity was the public release of the ‘interim version’ of EJSCREEN. EJSCREEN is a Geographic Information System-based tool that provides EPA with a nationally consistent dataset and methodology to highlight places that may be candidates for further review, analysis, or outreach as the agency develops programs, policies, and other activities to help overburdened communities. EJSCREEN helps better understand areas in need of environmental protection, health care access, housing, infrastructure improvement, community revitalization, climate resilience, and other services.

The release of EJSCREEN has represented a significant step forward for EPA’s efforts to integrate EJ considerations into federal agency policies, programs, and initiatives. A major obstacle has been a lack of consistent, accessible, and rigorous approaches for identifying areas where vulnerable populations live and where environmental burdens are concentrated. When the tool’s outputs are used in conjunction with knowledge of local conditions and other information, EJSCREEN can help identify areas which may warrant further attention due to EJ concerns. Since the public release, EJSCREEN has quickly grown to have thousands of regular users, and is enhancing the incorporation of EJ concerns and considerations into the day-to-day work across all levels of government throughout the entire United States. Additionally, since EJSCREEN has been available to the public, EPA has worked with a number of other federal agencies to employ the use of EJSCREEN to identify communities where they can focus efforts to deliver support to communities that need it most. EPA has employed EJ screening tools in a wide variety of circumstances. A few examples of the type of activities EJSCREEN supports across the agency include:

- informing outreach and engagement practices;
- implementing aspects of permitting, enforcement, compliance, and voluntary programs;

- developing retrospective reports of EPA work; and
- enhancing geographically-based initiatives.

By sharing this tool, EPA is excited to continue and build on work collaboratively with our partners at the federal, state, and local levels to greatly enhance the identification and support available to these communities.

BUILDING INTERNAL CAPACITY

EPA worked to build internal EJ capacity by integrating EJ policy guidance throughout EPA's program offices, providing training throughout the agency, and expanding EJ policy for tribes.

As in previous years, EPA's program offices (e.g. Office of Water, Office of Land and Emergency Management, etc.) have included guidance which integrates EJ principles into program office policies. This is executed by dedicated EJ liaison in each program office. The liaisons also work to ensure trust and collaboration are built and maintained within the offices on EJ activities. Such activities might include outreach to EJ communities on rules, education and training on technical tools, and ensuring an EJ lens or view is integrated whenever appropriate. In addition, OEJ continues to engage with EPA's regional offices, also through EJ liaisons, to identify issues, leverage resources, collaborate with program partners to craft comprehensive approaches to address local concerns, and target opportunities for enhancing sustainability.

In 2014, EPA mandated that all staff receive training in EJ. As a result, an introductory training in EJ was developed ([EJ 101, Introduction to EJ Online Training](#)) was developed by OEJ. The training was prepared and made available in the beginning of 2015, representing the first time EPA has required all staff to complete a web-based training that educates EPA employees on the history and importance of EJ. Over 17,000 EPA employees have taken and passed the *EJ 101* training program, which provides background on how EPA defines EJ, its importance within the agency's work, and key historical milestones of the EJ movement. The training also ensures that all EPA employees are informed about how EPA's EJ activities work to protect public health in communities overburdened by pollution, empower communities to take action to improve their health and environment, and establish diverse partnerships to achieve sustainable communities. EPA now requires all new employees to complete EJ 101 within the first 90 days of employment.

Building off of the [1984 Indian Policy](#), in July 2014, Administrator McCarthy issued the EPA "Policy on EJ for Working with Federally Recognized Tribes and Indigenous Peoples". The policy establishes 17 principles to ensure that achieving EJ is understood to be part of the EPA's work with federally recognized tribes, state-recognized tribes, individual tribal members, indigenous community-based and grass-roots organizations, and others living in Indian country.

The Policy consists of four main sections:

- Promoting EJ Principles in EPA Direct Implementation of Programs, Policies, and Activities;
- Promoting EJ Principles in Tribal Environmental Protection Programs;
- Promoting EJ Principles in EPA's Engagement with Indigenous Peoples; and
- Promoting EJ Principles in Intergovernmental Coordination and Collaboration.



Administrator Gina McCarthy signing the memo to issue the policy during a meeting of the EPA National Tribal Operations Committee, held at EPA Headquarters.

The agency focused on enhancing awareness of the policy among EPA staff and management through training sessions held throughout the agency. The policy was also highlighted in the agency's "EJ Month" correspondence as well as referenced in EPA's expanded tribal consultation policy pertaining to tribal treaty rights. In 2016, EPA will continue to enhance awareness and implement the principles of the policy among stakeholder groups.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

EPA is committed to identifying and responding to the challenges that a changing climate poses to human health and the environment. The President's Climate Action Plan requires annual federal agency "EJ Progress Reports." The Administration will continue to identify innovative ways to help our most vulnerable communities prepare for and recover from the impacts of climate change.

Climate change will have a disproportionate effect on particular geographic locations, communities, and demographic groups. The impacts of a warming and increasingly unstable climate are likely to exacerbate and introduce new environmental burdens and associated health impacts in communities dealing with EJ challenges across the nation. EPA's Policy Statement on Climate Change Adaptation calls on the Agency to focus on incorporating consideration of EJ into the design and evaluation of adaptation strategies.

Unfortunately, often these same populations who will bear the brunt of devastation from climate change are also often less prepared or adapted to face these impacts. Children, the elderly, the poor, the infirm, and tribal and indigenous populations are among the most vulnerable. For example, children living and playing outdoors in regions with higher ozone levels resulting from increased temperature will be at greater risk for experiencing asthma symptoms. The elderly are more vulnerable to heat stress because they are often in poorer health, have debilitating chronic diseases and are less able to regulate their body temperature during periods of extreme heat. They may also be taking medications that increase risk of dehydration and may live alone or have fewer social contacts, which may further exacerbate their vulnerabilities. Economic constraints can also place low-income households at disproportionate risk to extreme heat due to lack of air conditioning or failure to use air conditioning to save on energy costs.

EPA is committed to integrating EJ and climate adaptation into its programs, policies, rules and operations in such a way that to the extent possible, it effectively protects all demographic groups, geographic locations and communities, and natural resources that are most vulnerable to climate change. The agency is placing special emphasis on overburdened populations that are least able to help themselves, and work in partnership with them to effectively adapt to climate change.

EPA has already made significant strides towards addressing the burdens placed by climate change on EJ communities across the nation. For example, the Environmental Justice Small Grants Program awarded 17 grants in 2015 to support community-based preparedness and resilience efforts. Among the recipients were two notable projects that included making a Chicago neighborhood rain ready and identifying vulnerability in West Eugene, Oregon.

Chatham Neighborhood, Chicago

The Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) was awarded a grant aimed to help the neighborhood of Chatham become prepared for rain events as they become more prominent with climate change. CNT, partnering with the US Army Corps of Engineers, will design and test green infrastructure to improve storm water management and reduce urban flooding and water pollution. A Green Infrastructure model (Rain Ready) will be developed which can be replicated in other communities. Outputs include: 200 completed resident surveys, 100 residents attending meetings, 10 property assessments, and increased number of community leaders and partners addressing urban flooding and water quality.

West Eugene, Oregon

In West Eugene, Oregon the Beyond Toxics groups was awarded a grant designed to achieve community-identified solutions and accomplish measurable results by identifying areas of vulnerability, collecting community data, and building community effectiveness. This project seeks to help residents learn about how protecting natural and local wetlands can reduce the risk of flooding in flood prone areas. Additionally, community participants will learn to take necessary steps to reduce their vulnerability to flooding caused by increasingly frequent storms. Beyond Toxics will also work with residents to reduce health risks from exposure to high levels of fine particulate matter, and advance climate resiliency by learning to grow organic, culturally appropriate food for themselves and launching a community garden. Through this project, Beyond Toxics will provide education, training, and outreach on environmental issues and building capacity for current and future leaders on EJ issues, particularly vulnerable members of the Hispanic community.

- For more information on these grants, please visit: [EJ Small Grants Supporting Climate Adaptation](#).
- Also, the EPA Tribal General Assistance Program (GAP) allows Tribes to use GAP funds to support development of Climate Change Adaptation Plans. (For more information please visit pg. 4 of EPA's ["Guidance on the Award and Management of General Assistance Agreements for Tribes and Intertribal Consortia"](#))
- For more information, please visit [EPA's Climate Adaptation Webpage](#).

COLLABORATING ACROSS THE FEDERAL FAMILY

The Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (EJ IWG) plays a central role in creating healthy and sustainable communities by bringing together the federal family to address critical environmental justice issues. The EJ IWG facilitates the active involvement of all federal agencies to implement Executive Order 12898: ["Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations"](#) The order states that "Federal agencies must identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations."

Established by the Order, the EJ IWG is chaired by the EPA Administrator and includes 17 federal agencies and White House offices that work together to advance environmental justice principles across the federal government. The EJ IWG provides leadership, guidance, and support to federal agencies by engaging and supporting local communities in addressing environmental and human health impacts, and promoting and implementing comprehensive solutions to environmental justice concerns. The EJ IWG has standing committees and other committees established as necessary to carry out responsibilities outlined by the Order. The EJ IWG consists of senior leadership representatives, senior staff representatives, and other persons designated by each federal agency.

The EJ IWG was very active, collectively advancing environmental justice principles in areas such as health, transportation, housing, energy, and economic development in addition to the traditional environmental realm. A snapshot of the various projects included:

Creating and EJ IWG Governance Structure

The 2011 Charter was revised to include a governance structure and requirement for agency senior leadership to meet twice a year to discuss agency collaborative efforts and commitments that will help achieve environmental justice. The EJ IWG's governance structure includes the following standing (permanent) committees:

- Public Participation;
- Regional Interagency Working Groups;
- Strategy and Implementation Progress Reports; and
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In addition, consistent with the Presidential Memorandum issued with the Order, and based on public recommendations, every three years the EJ IWG determines if there are additional focus areas for federal agencies to consider and address. During fiscal years 2016 – 2018, the EJ IWG will maintain committees to address the following five focus areas:

- Native Americans/Indigenous Peoples;
- Rural Communities;
- Impacts from Climate Change;
- Impacts from Commercial Transportation (Goods Movement); and
- National Environmental Policy Act.

These committees consist of senior level Agency staff and are responsible for working together with state and local governments, tribes, and local communities to improve the health of communities and protect the environment across this country.

The EJ IWG devoted time to building an infrastructure for federal agencies to directly address the environmental, social, economic, and public health burdens in minority, low-income, indigenous and tribal communities. The following is a snapshot of the EJ IWG's efforts to advance environmental justice in 2015:

Collaborating and Building Capacity

- Increased federal agency membership on IWG subcommittees to address the focus areas (NEPA, Goods Movement, Title VI, Climate Change, Public Participation and Strategy and Implementation)
- Revised the 2011 Charter to establish a permanent Regional Interagency Working Group Committee and identified two additional focus areas: Native American/Indigenous Peoples and Rural Communities
- Revised the 2011 Charter to require agency Senior Leadership to meet twice per fiscal year to discuss agency collaborative efforts and commitments that will help achieve EJ
- Developed a draft three-year Framework for Collaboration (FY 2016-2018) and disseminated for public comment (For more information and to read the final document please visit: [EJ IWG 2016-2018 Framework for Collaboration.](#))
- Developed a draft Report on Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews
- Held inaugural meeting of the Rural Communities and Native American/Indigenous Peoples Subcommittees
- EPA Region 2/EJ Regional IWG selected six communities with EJ concerns to provide technical assistance and leverage federal resources
- Hosted the first ever Joint Chiefs of Staff and EJ IWG Senior Leadership Meeting in November 2014 to begin the dialogue on charting a direction for the EJ IWG
- Hosted with CEQ an EJ IWG Cabinet-Level Meeting in May 2015 with representatives from 15 Agencies/Departments
- EPA Region 4 Regional IWG developed the Northern Birmingham Revitalization Action Plan



2015 Interagency Working Group on EJ Senior Leadership and Chiefs of Staff Meeting held at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Making Connections with Communities

- Held three webinars seeking public comment with over 350 participants
- Featured four communities/community-based projects addressing EJ concerns to explore opportunities to leverage resources and technical assistance at monthly meeting
- EPA Region 4/ EJ Regional IWG hosted numerous community meetings around the Proctor Creek Watershed in Atlanta, GA and in North Birmingham, AL
- Launched the Educate, Motivate and Innovate Climate Justice Leaders Initiative
- Developed a Climate Justice Panel for the March 2015 National EJ Conference and Training Program.
- Partnered with the College/Underserved Community Partnership Program (CUPP) has 26 schools to deliver technical assistance to small, underserved communities from local colleges and universities at no cost to communities
- Convened a session at the August 2015 EPA Community Involvement Conference won the Most Interactive Session Award

EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION

EPA continues to engage with overburdened and underserved communities and expand the environmental justice conversation in a meaningful ways. This occurs through continued and direct engagement between EPA senior officials and communities, the use of information technology, and continued support of EPA's National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC).

To expand the conversation with communities, it is vital that communities have direct access to senior level officials in the agency. The EPA Administrator continues to support this by engaging directly with communities and consulting with the Senior Advisor on Environmental Justice and Community Revitalization. With support from the senior advisor, senior leadership participated in more than 40 events in underserved, overburdened communities. In June 2015, EPA participated in a tour and celebration of the Spartanburg ReGenesis Project, a successful collaboration credited with revitalizing the community. ReGenesis leveraged an initial \$20,000 grant from the EPA into more than \$270 million in revitalization, clean up, housing, job training, Federally Qualified Health Centers, and infrastructure. In September 2015, the Advisor moderated and taught at the 2015 Global Environmental Youth Symposium. The event was designed to give high school students, college students, post-doctoral students, administrators, and faculty a firsthand look at environmental stewardship, how greenhouse gases are formed, their effect on the environment, and steps that can be taken to mitigate and adapt to climate resilience. These are just a couple examples of the outreach efforts focused on expanding the conversation on environmental justice.

Engaging the public is a critical way EPA uses its limited public resources to tackle the issues that matter most to communities. EPA expanded the conversation through the following information tools:

- Environmental Justice in Action Blog: The EJ Blog captures individual experiences in working to address environmental justice issues around the country. Please select the following link to find the [EJ in Action Blog](#).
- EJ Listserv: Subscribers receive information on EPA and other federal agency activities in environmental justice, EJ in Action blog posts, programs, projects, grants, noteworthy news items, national meeting announcements, public comment periods and new publication notices. To subscribe, please visit the [EJ Listserv subscription page](#).

The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC), a federal advisory committee, was established September 30, 1993. The council provided advice and recommendations on broad, cross-cutting issues related to environmental justice from all stakeholders involved in the environmental justice dialogue. In addition, to providing independent advice and recommendations to the EPA Administrator, the council also provided a valuable forum for discussions on integrating environmental justice with other EPA priorities and initiatives. The NEJAC's efforts included evaluation of a broad range of strategic, scientific, technological, regulatory, community engagement, and economic issues related to environmental justice. Some notable council accomplishments in 2015 included:

- Held two public meetings (Arlington, VA and San Diego, CA) and three public teleconference meetings and provided advice and recommendations on several important policy issues.
- Issued six letters of recommendation focusing on the following topics: Agricultural Worker Protection, Chemical Safety, Clean Power Plant Rule, Goods Movement, Refinery Rule and Title VI.
- Issued a report, Recommendations for Promoting Community Resilience in Environmental Justice Industrial Waterfront Areas.

MOVING FORWARD IN FY 2016 AND BEYOND

EPA has made progress on integrating environmental justice, but there is much more to do. Having completed the foundational work that the Agency committed to in Plan EJ 2014, EPA released the draft EJ 2020 Action Agenda framework in April 2016 for a 90 day public comment period. The EJ 2020 Action Agenda, when finalized, will be EPA's next overarching strategic plan for environmental justice and will help advance environmental justice through our programs, policies, and activities. EJ 2020 delineates our thinking about the current efforts that require continued and focused attention, and what additional challenges we should undertake.

In 2016, EPA will finalize the draft framework for EJ 2020. The agency will continue to implement an aggressive action plan to improve the environment and public health in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental harms and risks.

We look forward to a continued dialogue with the public to ensure that EPA's work in environmental justice results in meaningful and measurable improvements in American communities. For more information on EPA's EJ Program, please visit EPA's environmental justice webpage at <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>.

ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| APA | American Planning Association |
| CARE | Community Action for a Renewed Environment |
| CEQ | White House Council on Environmental Quality |
| C-FERST | Community Focused Exposure and Risk Screening Tool |
| CTPG | Community and Tribal Program Group |
| CUPP | College/Underserved Community Partnership Program |
| EJ | Environmental Justice |
| EJCPS | Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Program |
| EJ IWG | Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice |
| EJSG | Environmental Justice Small Grants Program |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| NEJAC | National Environmental Justice Advisory Council |
| NEPA | National Environmental Policy Act |
| NPM | National Program Manager |
| OEJ | Office of Environmental Justice |
| ORD | Office of Research and Development |
| TAB | Technical Assistance for Brownfields |
| TASC | Technical Assistance to Communities |
| Tribal - FERST | Tribal Focused Environmental Risk and Sustainability Tool |
| UPR | Universal Periodic Review |





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EPA-300R16003

September 2016