



EPA ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRESS REPORT FY 2020

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Message from the Administrator

This year has been a difficult challenge for our nation, with some of the greatest impacts from COVID-19 being felt by lower socio-economic communities that often suffer from elevated environmental burdens. This report highlights our efforts to address the challenges that are disproportionately faced by low-income and minority communities in the wake of the pandemic, as well as our daily efforts to ensure our nation has clean air, clean water and clean lands.

Among our accomplishments detailed in the Fiscal Year 2020 Environmental Justice Progress Report, EPA provided over \$160 million in grant funding to support low income and minority communities. These grants will clean up Brownfield sites in communities with Opportunity Zones, reduce emissions from diesel vehicles and equipment at ports, provide environmental job training, and address challenges faced by communities related to the pandemic.



We recognize that low-income and minority communities are more likely to be undermined economically by their nearness to environmental hazards. To help combat this risk, in FY 2020, we deleted all or part of 27 sites from the Superfund National Priorities list for a second consecutive year. We also made notable improvements to air and water quality that will benefit low income and minority communities. We announced a new \$4.3 million grant program, under the Water Infrastructure Improvements of the Nation Act, to help protect children in tribal communities from lead in drinking water by boosting lead testing in schools and childcare centers. And this year we reclassified 20 areas of the country that now meet air quality standards, allowing communities to breath cleaner air and permit new businesses more easily.

In addition, EPA finalized rules that will make meaningful differences for these communities. The Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient Vehicles Rule ensures that more people – particularly lower-income and minority populations – have greater access to newer, cleaner, more affordable cars which will also improve air quality for people living near highways.

We recently finalized a rule that will reduce lead dust-related risks to children in pre-1978 homes and childcare facilities where lead removal activities take place. We recognize that the negative health impacts of lead exposure disproportionately hurt children. This regulation will help to provide a healthier environment for America’s children and is part of this Administration’s continued efforts to ensure healthy homes for all Americans, regardless of their zip code.

Communities that deal with the worst pollution in this country – and tend to be low-income and minority – face multiple environmental problems that need solving. In August, I spoke to the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council about our efforts to strengthen environmental justice and our interest in finding new opportunities to collaborate and make progress together. In September, I delivered a speech at the Nixon Library in California that included my vision for how EPA can help communities become healthier in a more comprehensive way by focusing on community revitalization on a greater scale. In my speech, I committed to tear down the silos between programs within the agency so that we can be more effective in addressing the environmental burdens that communities face. As one example, in December, we launched the Clearinghouse for Environmental Finance, a one-stop shop database to make it easier for communities to access funding and other resources available through our air, land, and water programs.

Despite the many challenges facing our staff during this pandemic, they worked tirelessly to achieve our mission to protect public health and the environment. It has truly been an honor for me to work alongside the EPA staff during 2020, which also happens to be the 50th anniversary of the agency’s creation back in 1970. Looking ahead, I am confident that EPA will spend the next 50 years building upon the achievements of our first 50 years, and leave a healthier environment for future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Wheeler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andrew Wheeler
EPA Administrator



Executive Summary



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Low-income, minority, tribal, and indigenous communities are more likely to be impacted by environmental hazards and more likely to live near contaminated lands. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA or Agency) continues to strengthen environmental and public health protections for vulnerable, low-income, minority, tribal and indigenous communities—making measurable progress in improving outcomes for these Americans especially given COVID-19 concerns over the past year.

The FY 2020 Environmental Justice Progress Report (“FY 2020 Report”), mandated by [Executive Order 12898](#) on Environmental Justice, highlights the outcomes the EPA is achieving for communities with environmental justice concerns. These outcomes include accelerating the clean-up of contaminated sites and returning them to productive use, improving air quality in areas out of attainment, financing critical water infrastructure improvements, and delivering technical assistance and grant funding to economically distressed communities, including Opportunity Zones.

The FY 2020 Report provides examples of EPA’s efforts across the nation to deliver a cleaner, healthier environment, develop and maintain more effective partnerships, and provide greater certainty, compliance, and effectiveness for environmental justice communities.

The EPA continues to work day in and day out to provide clean air, water and land, with a particular focus on environmental justice. The FY 2020 Report demonstrates the Agency’s commitment to advance and accelerate this important work to fulfill our critical mission and protect the American people we serve.

A Cleaner, Healthier Environment:

- Responded to impacts of the [COVID-19](#) pandemic on vulnerable communities by working with partners in communities, we reprogrammed \$1 million in existing funds for State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreement funding, developed technical guidance on COVID-19 issues, and shared important information on disinfectant products, and information in [11 different languages](#).
- Deleted all or part of 27 sites from the National Priorities list for a second consecutive year.

- Announced a new Water Infrastructure Improvements of the Nation Act, including a \$4.3 million grant program, to help protect children in tribal communities from lead in drinking water.
- Redesignated 20 areas as meeting air quality standards.
- Provided technical assistance to communities affected by Superfund sites so they could meaningfully contribute to the cleanup process, including three communities that received Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) and 37 communities that received support through the Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) Program.
- Awarded \$46.19 million to support [State and Tribal Brownfields Response Programs](#) and continued to encourage the prioritization of sites in communities with the greatest need, including communities with EJ challenges.
- Awarded 26 communities with Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) grants, totaling \$5.1 million. Application evaluation considered target communities' high indicators of need, including low-income, minority, and unemployed populations. All 26 selected communities plan to serve census tracts designated as federal Opportunity Zones.
- Awarded approximately \$40 million in FY 2020 Diesel Emissions Reduction Act funding for projects in and around goods movements facilities, with priority given to projects that take place in nonattainment areas and special consideration given to projects that meaningfully involve vulnerable and overburdened communities. Published a series of [community-port collaboration](#) materials and continued to work with stakeholders around the Port of Providence. This initiative supports efforts to reduce emissions from diesel vehicles and equipment at ports, which can pose health risks to nearby communities often comprised of low income and minority populations.
- Announced a new \$4.3 million grant program to help protect children in tribal communities from lead in drinking water at schools and childcare facilities.
- Awarded 151 communities with Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup grants, totaling \$65.6 million. Of the communities selected to receive Brownfield grants this year, 118 can potentially assess or clean up brownfield sites in census tracts designated as Opportunity Zones, and nearly 30% are first time recipients.
- Selected 2020-2023 National Compliance Initiatives that prioritize impacts on vulnerable communities.
- Completed the [Getting Risk Communication Right: Helping Communities Plan at Superfund Sites](#) report to lay out how EPA is working to improve risk communication and community involvement practices during the post-construction, long-term stewardship phase of Superfund cleanups.
- Advanced EJ principles in chemical safety and protection by creating a [Spanish Translation Guide for Pesticide Labeling](#) to help translate pesticide information into Spanish and recruiting over 262 trainers to provide Farmworker Health and Safety Training to 6,635 farmworkers and agricultural employers on pesticide safety, limiting family exposure to pesticides, and pesticide exposure.
- Performed 778 EJ screenings in EPA's enforcement work to assure that enforcement personnel working on a case are aware of potential EJ concerns in a community, and to gauge how much enforcement work is being done in areas with potential EJ concerns.
- Provided a total of \$4.46 million EJ grant funding to state, tribal, and community partners through 18 Collaborative Problem-Solving Agreements, 12 additional EJ Small Grants, and 10 State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreements, a significant increase over the typical annual EJ grant budget of \$1.2 million.

More Effective Partnerships:

- Convened and supported the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice, which continued its natural disaster efforts, e.g., bringing diabetes supplies to Puerto Rico, and trainings (e.g., National Environmental Policy Act Webinar on Best Practices for Meaningful Engagement for EJ Without Public Meetings), with over 1,900 participants.
- Piloted the Interagency Interfaith Collaboration for Vulnerable Communities in Shamokin, Pennsylvania, to assist in the development of the city's Rebuilding Action Plan.
- Coordinated with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on issues related to public housing and multifamily project-based rental assistance housing near Superfund sites as part of a Memorandum of Understanding.
- Built capacity among the local workforce and overburdened communities in Puerto Rico by co-hosting Lead-Mold-Asbestos Awareness Seminars and grant training workshops with the local government.
- Worked with tribes to improve the environment and health in Indian Country, e.g., revitalizing contaminated and advanced recycling efforts.
- The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) held a February 2020 public meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, where three EPA Regional Administrators attended, two of whom presented to the NEJAC. Representatives from 10 federal agencies and 16 state agencies attended. A total of 234 individuals attended in-person or via phone, and 18 members of the public shared their EJ concerns. The NEJAC also held an August 2020 public teleconference meeting where a total of 200 individuals attended via phone and 37 members of the public shared their EJ concerns.





Greater Certainty, Compliance and Effectiveness:

- EJ Program trained 1,676 individuals, representing a wide range of federal, state and local governments and nongovernment organizations on EJSCREEN, EPA's EJ screening tool.
- Partnered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other state, federal and university partners to support recovery efforts in the Florida Panhandle following Hurricane Michael.
- Achieved a 99.5% ticket closure rate for the 630 inquiries received on the EJ Hotline, which is a way for anyone to contact EPA if they are experiencing or have the potential to experience adverse environmental and public health impacts in their residence and communities.
- In FY 2020, EPA's Community Involvement Coordinators:
 - ◇ Held or participated in 570 public meetings and conducted more than 1,200 interviews with community members living near Superfund sites.
 - ◇ Distributed more than 750 factsheets, mailings, postcards, advertisements, or newsletters that reached more than 259,000 people living near Superfund sites.
- Launched an online [RCRA Public Participation Toolkit](#) to empower communities to become more actively involved in the permit and cleanup decision-making processes for hazardous waste facilities.
- EPA will continue to deepen its commitment to protect the health and environment for everyone across the United States. For more information on EPA's EJ efforts, resources, and tools, please visit the [Office of Environmental Justice](#) website. For up-to-date information about Environmental Justice funding opportunities, events, and webinars, subscribe to EPA's environmental justice listserv by sending a blank email to: join-epa-ej@lists.epa.gov.



SECTION 1 – A Cleaner, Healthier Environment

EPA’s EJ work aligns with the Agency’s strategic goals and core mission. As part of these goals, the Agency works to ensure the rule of law and fair process, so that everyone in the United States has the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards. This work is accomplished through EPA’s national programs and Regional offices, along with several EJ efforts that are led or co-led by OEJ through the Agency’s EJ Program.

EPA NATIONAL PROGRAMS

LAND

Superfund Redevelopment

Reusing and returning Superfund sites back to productive use has resulted in dramatic changes in communities by improving the quality of life, raising property values, and providing needed services to communities. The Superfund remedial program credits much of the success through collaborations with federal agencies, states, tribes, local governments and other partners:

Today, about 1,000 Superfund sites on the National Priorities List (NPL) support new and ongoing uses, which is roughly half of the sites on Superfund’s NPL.

EPA has collected data on more than 9,180 businesses at many of these sites. In FY 2019, these businesses generated \$58.3 billion in sales and employed more than 208,400 people who earned a combined income of more than \$14.4 billion.

Over the last nine years (2011-2019), the ongoing operations of these businesses have generated at least \$326.7 billion (inflation adjusted) in sales, which is more than 22 times the \$14.4 billion (inflation adjusted) EPA has spent cumulatively at these sites.

Thanks in part to Superfund Redevelopment and EPA’s RE-Powering America’s Land initiative, 64 Superfund

sites are now home to alternative energy facilities. As of September 2019, these facilities provided enough energy to power approximately 94,000 homes. Wind, solar and landfill gas facilities make up about 92% of these projects.

Superfund Site Resiliency

In addition to the Superfund program's existing processes that consider the risks and effects of severe weather events, the Agency has taken additional steps to ensure these considerations are woven into cleanup processes. In FY 2020, EPA updated three key climate resilience technical fact sheets designed to help federal, state, and local governments and other stakeholders identify, prioritize, and implement measures to ensure Superfund sites are resilient to extreme weather events.

Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI) and Community Partnerships in Southern California

EPA's Superfund Job Training Initiative is a job readiness program that provides training and employment opportunities for people living in communities near Superfund sites. Many of these areas are communities with EJ concerns – historically under-represented minority and low-income neighborhoods and areas burdened with significant environmental challenges. EPA's goal is to help these communities develop job opportunities that remain long after a Superfund site has been cleaned up. In December 2020, 20 community members completed EPA's Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI) training at the San Gabriel Valley Superfund sites in La Puente, California. Through a partnership with the San Gabriel Basin Water Quality Authority, City of La Puente, Hacienda La Puente Adult Education, and America's Job Center of California, SuperJTI provided local job seekers with new skills. After a rigorous screening and recruitment process, trainees earned certifications in hazardous waste and emergency response, water distribution and treatment, CPR/first aid alongside professional development training. After the program, SuperJTI provided the graduates' information to San Gabriel Valley Superfund site remedial contractors and area employers to help place graduates.

Carter Carburetor Cleanup Completed and PGA Youth Golf Training Facility Planned

In September 2020, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler joined Region 7 Administrator Jim Gulliford and local dignitaries at an event with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis, to [announce the completion of site cleanup](#) at the Carter Carburetor Superfund Site in St. Louis, Missouri. EPA and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater St. Louis entered into an agreement to transfer ownership of the former Carter Carburetor site property. The property is located in one of St. Louis's oldest neighborhoods which is also a community with environmental justice concerns.

Given the proximity to the youth club, the site was the subject of significant community concern regarding potential exposures to area children and residents. In 2019, the site was placed on the Administrator's Emphasis List and in May 2020, site work was complete. Long in the shadows of an industrial site, the Boys and Girls Club of Greater St. Louis will build a golf training facility for inner city youth in partnership with Gateway PGA. The remainder of the site will be transformed, potentially into a pollinator park, community garden or urban prairie under the stewardship of the St. Louis Reutilization Authority.



Administrator Wheeler and partners at the completion ceremony for the Carter Carburetor Site in St. Louis, MO.

Significant Cleanup Progress Made at Colorado Smelter Superfund Site Due to Accelerated Funding Decision

The former Colorado Smelter in Pueblo, Colorado, was a silver and lead smelter active in the Eilers, Bessemer and Grove neighborhoods from 1883 to 1908. Due to high levels of lead and arsenic in neighborhood soil, the site was added to EPA's National Priorities List in 2014. The site is made up of 1,900 residential and commercial properties. With many with bare-soil yards, young children, women of childbearing age, and pregnant or nursing women are particularly vulnerable to the effects of exposure to lead. Blood lead screening showed these groups have been impacted.

Decisions made in 2017 and 2018 resulted in an expedited cleanup of lead, arsenic and heavy metals at the site. The goal of the decision was to remove smelter contamination and benefit public health more quickly, particularly in children. "The decision to accelerate funding for cleaning up the Colorado Smelter is one of the best decisions EPA leadership has made in the past several years," said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler during a visit to the community in July 2020. "We've sampled over 1,000 homes in the Eilers, Bessemer and Grove neighborhoods and have done soil and indoor dust clean-ups in hundreds of homes with the expectation of completing the project by 2023 – accelerating the residential cleanup to be completed in 5 years rather than over 12 years. Cleaning up these neighborhoods is the reason EPA was created; so, I'm proud of our progress."

"This is an environmental justice community, and there are a lot of people here who need help," said EPA Region 8 Administrator, Greg Sopkin. EPA Region 8's site team and their state and local health department partners conduct outreach and health education activities in the area, routinely engage with community members when making decisions regarding cleanup activities, and strive to identify and connect with impacted minority (primarily Latinx¹) and low-income populations resulting in increased and meaningful participation. Efforts to engage with the Latinx population in the area include providing outreach documents and translation services during public meetings. Early on, the site team engaged with the Region 8 EJ team to meet Pueblo community champions so EPA would better understand issues impacting the community, including potential EJ concerns. Input from the community was among the factors influencing the Region's decision to seek additional funding for accelerated cleanups.

Removal of Contaminated Sediment at Donna Canal Superfund Site, Hidalgo County, Texas

The [Donna Reservoir and Canal System Superfund site](#) is located south of the city of Donna near the border with Mexico. It consists of a 400-acre reservoir and a system of lined and unlined irrigation canals. Community representatives provided insight on the communication and cultural barriers that exist in colonias and emphasized the need to prevent human consumption of fish from the site. EPA created a public awareness campaign to communicate the possible health effects related to eating fish from the site and are conducting ongoing fish removal actions. In May 2020, EPA and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) completed removal of nearly 14,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment from the site. After completing the sediment dredging, EPA restored the canal banks and placed signage around the site warning against consuming the contaminated fish. EPA and TCEQ will continue assessing sediment and fish for contamination. EPA created a video about the recent work in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#).

"The removal of this massive amount of sediment is a crucial step toward restoring the site to its original condition and is just one example of the many ways TCEQ and EPA work together to clean up the Texas environment," said TCEQ Commissioner Bobby Janecka.

¹ Latinx is a gender neutral term for people of Latin American descent.

Brownfields Program

EPA's [Brownfields Program](#) empowers states, communities, tribes, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse contaminated properties. Revitalizing brownfield sites and putting these properties back into productive reuse creates many economic and environmental benefits throughout the community. In FY 2020, EPA's [Office of Brownfields and Land Revitalization](#) accomplished the following:

Awarded 151 communities with Brownfields Assessment, Revolving Loan Fund, and Cleanup grants, totaling \$65.6 million. These grant funds will provide communities with funding to assess, clean up and redevelop underutilized properties while protecting public health and the environment. Of the communities selected to receive Brownfield grants this year, 118 can potentially assess or clean up brownfield sites in census tracts designated as Opportunity Zones, and nearly 30% are first time recipients.

Awarded \$46.19 million to support [State and Tribal Brownfields Response Programs](#) and continued to encourage the prioritization of sites in communities with the greatest need, including communities with EJ challenges.

Awarded 26 communities with Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) grants, totaling \$5.1 million. This grant funding will be used to recruit, train, and place unemployed and underemployed individuals with the skills needed to secure sustainable employment in the environmental field. The environmental job training programs advance environmental justice by providing opportunities for residents in areas impacted by environmental contamination, economic disinvestment and health disparities. Of the programs selected for funding this year, 31% plan to serve residents of communities experiencing persistent poverty, and nearly 70% plan to serve veterans. All 26 selected communities plan to serve census tracts designated as federal Opportunity Zones.

Brownfield Program Successfully Impacting all Parts of the Great Lakes Region

The Region 5 brownfields program improves the lives of people with environmental justice concerns through grants to local partners. By considering socioeconomic and other EJ criteria during the grant selection, most brownfields grants are awarded in EJ areas of concern and opportunity zones. In FY 2020, Region 5 issued 54 grants totaling \$19.6 million dollars. The region completed 401 property assessments, 185 clean-ups, leveraged \$772,432,680 and 3,377 jobs, and prepared 175 properties for reuse and redevelopment.

Racine, Wisconsin: Success in Brownfields Job Training

The Great Lakes Community Conservation Corps (GLCCC), a grant recipient of EPA's Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Program since 2015, recruits, trains, and places unemployed and underemployed residents in environmental jobs. To date, GLCCC has received \$584,122 in EPA funding which has led to hundreds of residents obtaining the skills necessary to secure employment in the environmental field.



Student at HAZWOPER Training demonstrate sample collection technique.



Students in HAZWOPER Lead Abatement Training.

Minnesota: Targeted EJ Investments

Since 2003, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Minnesota Brownfields has targeted Brownfields Assessment funds towards sites in EJ neighborhoods. Special emphasis is placed on sites that would benefit affordable housing, greenspace, or economic development, and promote use of existing infrastructure. To date, 31 out of the 54 sites assessed have been in EJ areas. Many sites have been redeveloped. In St. Paul, a former auto shop is now a glassmaking studio and in Minneapolis, a former warehouse is home to apartments and a diner.



Brownfield site before cleanup and redevelopment, used for furniture manufacturing.



700 Central is rehabbed into residences and a restaurant and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Flint, Michigan: Leveraging Every Possible Resource

The Chevy-in-the-Hole site was a major auto manufacturing plant until the 1990s. In 2005, the factories were demolished leaving a 67-acre site covered in concrete. In 2012, the city of Flint acquired the property and negotiated a [Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Prospective Purchaser Agreement](#). The site design included a community park called Chevy Commons with meadows, wetlands, and trails. Since then, the Genesee County Land Bank and partners have leveraged \$12.8 million to build the park. The project is 90% complete and is now a beautiful riverfront park.



The former Chevy Main Assembly Plant, after demolition of the buildings.



The same site, transformed into Chevy Commons, a beautiful riverside park.

EJ at the 2019 Brownfields Conference

In December 2019, over 2,000 attendees participated in the National Brownfields Training Conference in Los Angeles, California. This annual conference provides training, research and technical assistance to communities to facilitate the inventory of brownfield sites, site assessments and remediation of brownfield sites, community involvement, and site preparation. This conference also offered high quality

learning experiences with attention to EJ challenges as well as peer-to-peer networking for stakeholders to help participants address their brownfields challenges, promote equitable development, and improve environmental and public health.

Prior to the conference, community members and conference attendees were invited to participate in the EJ Caucus. Local EJ leaders from three community groups in Los Angeles, California; National City, California; and Phoenix, Arizona, presented on their brownfields project successes and challenges. Nearly 200 participants had the opportunity to meet with and learn from brownfields experts on a variety of relevant topics such as community outreach, identifying assets and challenges, resource opportunities, grant writing, building a team for remediation and redevelopment, and promoting health in reuse projects.

During the three-day conference, over 30 sessions were classified in the Community Engagement and EJ category to help participants identify sessions on key EJ topics. Some of the sessions included presentations and facilitated discussions on promoting partnerships in communities with EJ challenges, innovative solutions for stakeholder groups, building community confidence, eliminating food deserts, environmental job training, intergenerational inclusion in brownfields redevelopment, and promoting EJ in Opportunity Zones.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

East Chicago, Indiana: Former DuPont East Chicago Facility Cleanup and Redevelopment Underway

The \$26.6 million Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) soil and groundwater cleanup continues at the former DuPont East Chicago Facility located in an Opportunity Zone in East Chicago, Indiana. In 2018, EPA prepared a community involvement plan to inform, engage, and support the EJ community affected by the former Dupont facility, as well as the separate U.S. Smelter and Lead Refinery, Inc. Superfund site. To date, in 2020, over 12,700 cubic yards of lead and arsenic contaminated soil has been removed from several source areas across the former DuPont facility, along with the in-situ stabilization of an additional 3,100 cubic yards of deeper saturated soils. With baseline groundwater sampling completed, the preliminary groundwater treatment for the northern and southern zones began in the Fall of 2020.

EPA has required the current property owner and redeveloper, East Chicago Gateway Partners (ECGP), to keep the community informed and involved in the cleanup process. This has been accomplished through the development of an ECGP webpage devoted to the on-site cleanup and redevelopment, the issuance of newsletters throughout the community, and outreach events. In June 2020, the second installment of the East Chicago Public Outreach Report was mailed to the community providing updates on the EPA cleanup, planned outreach events, and resources for more information. The ultimate goal for the site includes ECGP's redevelopment project called "The East Chicago Logistics Center." Phase 1 of the project will involve expedited construction of a 1.1 million square-foot warehouse. Local hiring and job opportunities are a priority of this project. To date, the remediation contractors have hired six area residents as full-time employees. Each employee was trained and is an active part of the corrective action team. More opportunities for local employment are expected in the coming months.

Reducing Harmful Diesel Emissions

EPA addresses disproportionate environmental burdens through a variety of ways, including grants and community partnerships. EPA offers grant funding to reduce diesel emissions through the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA), and the Ports Initiative supports effective communication and engagement between the port industry and communities to address air quality concerns. The reduction of diesel emissions in the transportation sector, particularly those operating in communities around ports, airports, and goods movement facilities, is a priority for EPA.

In FY 2020, EPA awarded approximately \$40 million in DERA funding for projects in and around goods movements facilities. Priority is given to projects that take place in nonattainment areas, places with air toxic concerns, and goods movement areas that receive a disproportionate quantity of air pollution from diesel fleets. Goods movements facilities include ports, airports, rail yards, terminals, and distribution centers.

Further priority is given to projects that engage affected communities and directly address their needs and concerns. In FY 2020, EPA refined its DERA Request for Applications (RFA) by providing additional information to help applicants identify factors that indicate disproportionate impacts to communities and data sources to help describe health disparities in their applications. In addition to suggesting factors applicants may consider in describing health disparities in their communities, EPA provided links to federal data including county-level trends in rates of death, disease, and risk factors. By providing further information and data sources, EPA hoped to assist applicants in developing robust projects that benefit communities. EPA will continue to provide priority points to applications that benefit affected communities and will refine this section of the RFA as needed in the future.



The EPA Ports Initiative supports efforts to reduce emissions from diesel vehicles and equipment at ports, which can pose health risks to nearby communities often comprised of low income and minority populations. In FY 2020, the Ports Initiative published a series of [community-port collaboration](#) materials, including case studies on three community-port collaboration pilot projects that took place in Seattle, New Orleans, and Savannah. Additionally, EPA continues to work with stakeholders around the Port of Providence who participated in a similar community-port collaboration pilot project in 2017-2018. Participants in the pilot projects tested out [the Community-Port Collaboration Toolkit](#) developed by EPA and provided feedback for improvement. These pilot projects helped build stronger relationships between the communities and port operators and provided lessons learned and resources for collaborative action to improve air quality at other ports across the country.

Providence Port/Community Stakeholder Workgroup

In 2017, EPA initiated a pilot project as part of its [Ports Initiative](#) to enhance community-port collaboration. EPA worked with the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island (EJLRI), the city of Providence, Port of Providence (ProvPort), community stakeholders, and other interested local entities in Providence to facilitate a dialogue between near-port residents, businesses, government agencies and port-related stakeholders. To begin, EPA conducted a needs assessment and a review of key documents related to Agency, port, and community initiatives. Following the needs assessment, site visits and affinity group meetings were held to identify community priorities.

Prior to the pilot, most stakeholders did not work together. Through extensive outreach, key agency and industry representatives came to the table and stayed engaged throughout the process. On the community

side, outreach and relationship-building required a different approach. With limited resources, EJLRI was able to conduct one community organizing meeting where a neutral third party provided by EPA facilitated a discussion. This resulted in a shared understanding around the need for additional funding to support community organizing. Additional lessons learned from the project include:

- Invest in building trust-centered relationships;
- Develop a project timeline that reflects the community's pace and capacity;
- Compensating community members for their participation;
- Acknowledge inequities between community members and other stakeholders; and
- Build a collaborative network of stakeholders.

In the summer of 2020, EPA Region 1 was able to initiate a truck count survey for the impacted area, as a result of citizens' concerns. In September 2020, EPA announced that it anticipates that it will award approximately a \$260,000 Community-Scale Air Toxics Ambient Monitoring grant to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) once all legal and administrative requirements are satisfied. With this grant, RIDEM plans to characterize air toxics emissions near the Port of Providence and characterize risk to the most highly affected populations, including surrounding environmental justice areas, schools and hospitals. The multi-stakeholder working group will continue convening quarterly to advance projects that improve conditions at the port and in the near-port communities of Providence, Rhode Island.

Having the Port-Community Meetings has created a working relationship between the business port tenants, state and city agencies, and neighborhood groups, that have long been overlooked and desperately needed. With our new working relationships, we can now create the groundwork for a 'Green Justice Zone', that highlights the necessity of Social Justice, Environmental Justice, and Climate Change preparation. Thank you to the EPA!

- Linda Perri, Washington Park Association

Particulate Matter National Ambient Air Quality Standards Proposal Virtual Public Hearings

In April 2020, EPA proposed to retain the nation's air quality standards for particle pollution, a topic of interest to many communities. In advance of this proposal, EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS) was planning for several in-person public hearings across the country. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, however, those plans needed to quickly change and options for providing virtual public comment investigated. Knowing the tremendous interest in this rule, EPA explored options for a virtual public hearing focusing on platforms that allowed the greatest access to the greatest number of participants and did not require participants to have computer or internet capabilities. The first step was outreach, enabled by ensuring that the fact sheet about the rule and information about the public hearing were available in seven languages. Next was to identify a platform that would allow nearly universal access, recreating as closely as possible the in-person public hearing experience. OAQPS determined that a moderated teleconference would ensure:

- Access via telephone for as many speakers as registered,
- Translation services were available upon request,
- Speakers who did not register in advance were able to offer testimony,
- People only interested in listening could attend as listener only, and
- No speaker would be turned away.

Due to overwhelming interest and participation, the initial two days of virtual hearings were extended twice, for a total of six hearing sessions conducted over four different days. EPA hearing panelists heard testimony from 232 unique speakers, and 273 additional people were able to listen in on these virtual public hearings.

These virtual public hearings were an invaluable service to those who wanted to be heard on this important air quality issue. In December 2020, after carefully reviewing the most recent available scientific evidence and technical information, and consulting with the Agency's independent scientific advisors, EPA announced that it is retaining, without revision, the existing primary (health-based) and secondary (welfare-based) [PM NAAQS](#).

WATER

Making a Difference in Indian Country with the Drinking Water SRF Program

EPA engages in activities to ensure access to safe drinking water in tribal communities. This includes implementing regulations to ensure drinking water quality; providing grants to improve treatment, delivery and household access; and providing training and certification for tribal water personnel. Most recently, this includes issuing grants to implement voluntary testing programs for lead in drinking water at schools and childcare facilities.



The Oklahoma Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) program partnered with U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development, Indian Health Services, the Cherokee Nation, and the South Delaware County Regional Water Authority (SDCRWA) to provide over \$15 million in funding for the SDCRWA's new surface water treatment plant. This project, completed in December 2019, allowed the SDCRWA to enhance service for its current customers and to extend service to communities experiencing public health issues, including maximum contaminant level exceedances for fluoride, gross alpha, and radium. SDCRWA now continues to provide safe, reliable drinking water to seven communities in northeastern Oklahoma. The DWSRF provided approximately \$3 million for this project, including \$1.9 million in principal forgiveness.

In July 2020, EPA announced a new \$4.3 million grant program to help protect children in tribal communities from lead in drinking water at schools and childcare facilities. This is authorized by the Water Infrastructure Improvements of the Nation (WIIN) Act, the Lead Testing in School and Child Care Program Drinking Water Tribal Grant Program. The grant program provides funding to tribal consortia to test school and childcare facility drinking water for lead and provide technical assistance to tribal schools and childcare facilities on using the EPA's 3Ts - Training, Testing, and Taking Action - for Reducing Lead in Drinking Water guidance. The guidance provides steps to implement lead testing programs and develop monitoring, maintenance and/or sampling plans that protect children from lead exposure now and in the future.

Environmental Justice in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership

The Lower Passaic River Urban Waters Federal Partnership (LPR UWFP) is a collaboration of federal and state agencies, municipalities, and community-based organizations advancing cleanup, restoration, and stewardship of the Lower Passaic River and equitable, sustainable development along its banks. The New York-New Jersey Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP) is an ongoing effort to develop and implement a consensus driven plan to protect, conserve and restore the estuary. Together, the LPR UWFP and HEP accomplished the following in FY 2020:

- HEP awarded a community grant to Trust for Public Land, a member of the LPR UWFP, to support community engagement through a future art installation project in Dundee Island Park in Passaic, New Jersey. Dundee Island Park is the only accessible waterfront park in Passaic, an environmental justice community home to New Jersey's largest Mexican community and a population of 74% of Hispanic or Latinx descent.
- Helped manage other grant efforts and facilitated partner communication for events, including a shoreline litter cleanup, kayaking excursions, and a catch and release fish training event. In addition,

LPR UWFP and HEP partnered with USDA/US Forest Service during these events to conduct a social assessment on Passaic community open space resources, particularly around the waterfront.

- Supported “Virtual Brownbags: Adjusting Our Efforts in Response to COVID-19,” a webinar series that shared best practices on fundraising during a crisis, adapting monitoring programs to current times, continuing effective community engagement, and reducing pollution in environmental justice communities in times of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Coordinated a survey to identify potential struggles that workgroup members experience when supporting BIPOC (black, Indigenous and people of color) voices. The goal was to learn how to incorporate diversity, equity and inclusion into all areas of the work. Results of the survey will help create a roadmap that will help HEP and its network better support BIPOC and environmental justice and low-income communities.

CHEMICAL SAFETY AND POLLUTION PREVENTION

The Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP) is committed to advancing EJ principles to protect human health and the environment. OCSPP reviews pesticides and other chemicals for potential risks, with a special focus on more vulnerable groups such as children and workers. To accomplish this, OCSPP engages with stakeholders to ensure the Agency is using sound science and thoughtful decision-making to meet the needs of communities. For example, OCSPP works to protect children from lead-poisoning and pesticides, ensures farmworkers are protected from workplace hazards, and implements regulations to ensure the safety of chemicals in the marketplace. Below are examples of this work in FY 2020:

- **EPA Takes Important Step to Further Protect Children from Exposure to Lead-Contaminated Dust:** In December 2020, EPA announced a new action to better protect American children from the dangers of lead. This final rule will lower the clearance levels for the amount of lead that can remain in dust on floors and window sills after lead removal activities, known as abatement. These new clearance levels will reduce lead dust-related risks to children in pre-1978 homes and childcare facilities where lead abatement activities take place. After actions are taken to remove lead from a building, those buildings must then be tested to make sure that the cleaning activities were successful. These “clearance levels” indicate that lead dust was effectively removed at the end of the abatement work. EPA’s new clearance levels are 10 micrograms (μg) of lead in dust per square foot (ft^2) for floor dust and 100 $\mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$ for window sill dust, significantly lower than the previous levels of 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$ for floor dust and 250 $\mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$ for window sill dust.

Lead-contaminated dust, from chipped or peeling lead-based paint is one of the most common causes of elevated blood lead levels in children. Lead dust can be generated when lead-based paint deteriorates or is disturbed. Lead exposure, particularly at higher doses, can pose a significant health and safety threat to children and can cause irreversible and life-long health effects. Together, EPA’s 2019 hazard standards and 2020 clearance levels reflect the best available science on potential human health effects that result from exposure to lead.

In addition, EPA continues to make concerted efforts to increase the number of certified renovation firms capable of providing lead-safe renovation, repair and painting (RRP) services through targeted outreach campaigns to contractors. EPA also provides a nationwide list of certified renovation firms on EPA’s website to help the public identify firms that are capable of providing lead-safe RRP services.

- **EPA Takes Action to Stop Use of Certain Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Products and Protect American Consumers:** In June 2020, EPA announced a significant new use rule (SNUR) for long-chain perfluoroalkyl carboxylate (LCPFAC) chemical substances, which requires EPA to be notified before a company begins or resumes the import of articles containing long-chain PFAS. This action under the Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA) also requires EPA review and approval before a company can begin or renew the LCPFAC uses identified in the SNUR. This action also finalized an amendment to an existing SNUR for perfluoroalkyl sulfonate chemical substances that makes inapplicable the exemption for persons who import perfluoroalkyl sulfonate chemical substances as

part of carpets. As part of the Agency's review, EPA has the authority to place restrictions on new uses of these chemicals, including import of certain products containing these chemicals. Given this, EPA can stop products containing PFAS from entering or reentering the marketplace unless it reviews and puts the necessary restrictions in place to address any unreasonable risks, including potentially exposing susceptible subpopulations. This action is part of EPA's commitment to addressing these chemicals under the Administrator's PFAS Action Plan.

- **EPA Created Guide to Help Translate Pesticide Safety Information into Spanish:** EPA took an important step to improve risk communication in October 2019 by expanding the Agency's Spanish language resources that assist with translating the health and safety portions of pesticide product labels. The new [Spanish Translation Guide for Pesticide Labeling](#) resource is available for anyone to use, including pesticide manufacturers, and provides a resource for pesticide registrants that choose to display parts of their pesticide product label in Spanish. EPA developed the Spanish translation guide in response to feedback from stakeholders who believe that having bilingual pesticide labeling is critical to the well-being of pesticide handlers and farmworkers, many of whom do not speak English as a first language. EPA generally allows pesticide registrants to translate product labels into any language so long as there is an EPA-accepted English version of the label and the translation is true and accurate. Some pesticide registrants already have their product labels fully translated in Spanish. However, many product labels are only available in English.
- **EPA Supported Implementation Efforts on the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard (WPS):** EPA supported several activities throughout the fiscal year to implement the WPS. Through cooperative agreements, over 262 trainers were recruited to provide Farmworker Health and Safety Training to 6,635 farmworkers and agricultural employers on pesticide safety, limiting family exposure to pesticides, and pesticide exposure, and heat stress prevention. In addition, the Pesticides Education Resources Collaborative developed resources on pesticide safety and the WPS for pesticide safety educators and trainers, agricultural employers, and pesticide regulatory agencies. Materials focused on WPS respirator requirements, WPS ventilation criteria, WPS contacts by state, and a WPS inspector resource library.

EPA provided capacity building support to Guam and the Pacific Islands through a cooperative agreement with Michigan State University. The university conducted a WPS train-the-trainer workshop and provided information on using available resources and materials. As a result of community engagement meetings, pesticide regulatory and education professionals in these locations expressed a need to strengthen pesticide safety education and outreach to control invasive species. Subsequently, an interactive virtual reality training video was developed on the control of the coconut rhinoceros beetle.

An EPA contractor, the Hispanic Communications Network (HCN), aired three EPA-approved Spanish-language radio messages that targeted farmworkers and encouraged wearing appropriate clothing while working in the field, washing hands before using a cell phone, and what to do if you come in contact with pesticides. The messages were broadcast 117 times on 150 radio stations across the country over a span of 39 days in June and July 2020. Furthermore, an EPA contractor, the CauseWay Agency, developed a pesticide safety poster with information required by the WPS for display on agricultural establishments. The poster was translated into Spanish, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Ilocano, Karen, Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

- **EPA Spanish Language Portal to Provide Information on Over 2,000 Safer Products:** EPA's Safer Choice program has a [Spanish language portal](#) allowing consumers, workers, and institutions to identify chemical (and cleaning) products that meet EPA's stringent criteria for safer chemical ingredients – which can be an important tool for protecting human health and the environment in EJ communities. Products with the Safer Choice label help consumers and commercial buyers identify products with safer chemical ingredients, without sacrificing quality or performance.

ENFORCEMENT

EPA's Implementation of National Compliance Initiatives for 2020-2023 Prioritizes Compliance and Enforcement Efforts Where Violations Affect Vulnerable Communities

The Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) continues to strengthen the integration of EJ into the Agency's enforcement program. In FY 2020, EPA concluded 531 enforcement cases covering 562 facilities located in areas with potential environmental justice concerns. Those enforcement cases are estimated to reduce pollution in these areas by 37.3 million pounds. Specifically, the pollutant reductions were from:

- Air Pollutants, reduced, treated, or eliminated – 19.3 million pounds;
- Hazardous and Non-Hazardous waste treated, minimized or properly disposed – 3.9 million pounds; and
- Water pollutants reduced, treated, or eliminated - 14.2 million pounds.

For FY 2020-FY 2023 OECA prioritized compliance and enforcement efforts where violations affect vulnerable communities in selecting National Compliance Initiatives (NCI) last year.² Specifically, EPA is advancing the NCI efforts on [Creating Cleaner Air for Communities by Reducing Excess Emissions of Harmful Pollutants from Stationary Sources and Reducing Hazardous Air Toxic Emissions from Hazardous Waste Facilities](#) by focusing on those sources that adversely affect vulnerable populations or an area's attainment status. These initiatives allow the Agency to focus enforcement and compliance assistance efforts in areas where excess emissions of harmful pollutants are more likely to impact vulnerable populations. Under the [Reducing Risks of Accidental Releases at Industrial and Chemical Facilities NCI](#), the Agency is focusing on reducing the occurrence and impacts of releases from facilities that make, store, or use extremely hazardous substances, many of which are located in vulnerable communities. EPA is also working to benefit communities through the implementation of two additional NCIs: [Reducing Noncompliance with Drinking Water Standards at Community Water Systems](#), and [Reducing Significant Noncompliance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System \(NPDES\) Permits](#). In addition, EPA launched a Circuit Rider Program to provide technical assistance to small community wastewater and drinking water systems and tribal environmental programs. The Circuit Riders provide hands-on, face-to-face technical and compliance assistance to small Clean Water System operators.

The Agency is considering EJ throughout its core enforcement work, and implementation of the NCIs over the next three years. This is accomplished by reviewing all new cases to determine whether they may affect overburdened communities, structuring the resolution of enforcement actions to correct noncompliance, and communicating with affected communities. In FY 2020, EPA performed 778 EJ screenings in its enforcement work. These EJSCREEN reviews serve two purposes. They assure that EPA enforcement personnel working on a case are aware of the potential EJ concerns in a community, and they allow OECA to gauge how much of its enforcement work is being done in areas with potential EJ concerns.

² For FY 2020-FY 2023, the national enforcement and compliance assurance program focuses on priority areas that align with the FY 2018-FY 2022 Agency Strategic Plan, providing states and tribes with additional opportunities for meaningful engagement, and enhancing the use of EPA's full range of compliance assistance tools.

SCIENCE

Science and Social Justice in the Caño Martín Peña Estuary in San Juan, Puerto Rico

The largely working class and low-income communities near the Caño Martín Peña Estuary in San Juan, Puerto Rico, experience frequent flooding that results in water filled streets, homes, and schools. Storm drains cannot keep up with the deluge of water and urban runoff, which affects the health and prosperity of the local communities. Levels of fecal coliform in flood water and hydrogen sulfide in the air are dangerously high and can lead to long term health consequences. In addition, these communities have an increased prevalence of asthma, and many residents report gastrointestinal issues.

EPA researchers are trying to understand how the San Juan Bay Estuary is affected by the closure of the Caño Martín Peña channel by looking at biogeochemical cycling³ in the estuary, particularly for nitrogen, and by measuring contaminants of emerging concern. To best meet community needs, in FY2020, EPA researchers worked closely with local stakeholders such as the ENLACE Project, a non-profit organization that works to promote the equitable urban, social, and economic development of the eight communities of the Caño Martín Peña Estuary. The team continues to share data and other information with the local communities to help inform decision-making related to the Caño Martín Peña Estuary. The results of this work will help both improve human health and the quality of life as well as the health of the whole San Juan Bay Estuary.

Improving Access to Health Risk Communication Among Limited English Proficiency Populations

Exposure to wildfire smoke is a community health issue that has been gaining the attention of public health professionals and organizations, especially in states where fires are frequently large and intense. Wildfire smoke has significant health implications for those near the fire, as well as for those living farther downwind. While these risks affect the population broadly, individuals with limited English proficiency are at increased risk of exposure due to limited access to health risk communication resources that provide clear information about wildfire smoke and the exposure reduction actions they can take.

The Smoke Sense citizen science project aims to increase awareness about the health risks associated with inhalation of wildfire smoke and actions individuals can take to reduce the amount of smoke they breathe. The [Smoke Sense](#) mobile app is free to download, available on both iOS and Android phones, and has more than 44,000 participants. Through feedback from stakeholders, the Smoke Sense team learned that translating text in the app into Spanish would reduce a barrier for receiving information among individuals who speak Spanish and have limited English proficiency. Based on this feedback, the research team adapted the app's source code to accept translated text. The first language the app has been translated into is Spanish, allowing Spanish-speaking individuals to more fully engage. This effort reduces barriers for individuals with limited English proficiency by making available within the Smoke Sense app information about evolving environmental health threats and protective health behaviors.



Smoke Sense graphic.



Smoke Sense graphic - home page for San Francisco.

3 Definition: A function that involves the biologic, physical, and chemical transformations of various nutrients within the biota, soils, water, and air.

REGIONAL EFFORTS TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO LEAD

EPA and State of New Jersey Collaborate to Reduce Lead in Drinking Water in Newark

Newark has been burdened with a myriad of health concerns exacerbated by drinking water contaminated with dangerous levels of lead. At its core, environmental injustice hits communities of color in ways that are not seen or felt immediately. There is no safe level of lead exposure. Pregnant women and children are most at risk. Since 2018, EPA has worked closely with the City of Newark and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to protect residents from elevated lead levels in drinking water. EPA Region 2, EPA's Office of Research and Development (ORD), NJDEP, and the City of Newark collaborated to determine the best approach for reducing lead levels in tap water in the affected areas of Newark until corrosion control treatment could be effective again.

Newark has undertaken what is very likely to be the nation's most aggressive lead service line replacement program. Using funding from the EPA State Revolving Fund (SRF) and from a county bond program, Newark began a program in March 2019 to replace all lead service lines (LSLs) in the city over 24 to 30 months. As of September 2020, over 14,000 LSLs of the approximately 18,000 LSLs in the city have been replaced. In June 2020, the Water Infrastructure Fund Transfer Act (WIFTA) allowed EPA Region 2 and New Jersey to transfer funds from their Clean Water SRF to their Drinking Water SRF of nearly \$110 million to fund drinking water lead abatement projects. EPA is strongly committed to continuing its long-standing and close collaboration with Newark and NJDEP to strengthen the city's capacity to ensure that Newark area residents can continue to receive clean drinking water.

EPA Region 4 Addresses Residential Lead Contamination in Three States

EPA has been actively cleaning up lead contamination in residential yards at the 35th Avenue site in Birmingham, Alabama, the Southside Chattanooga Lead site in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the Westside Atlanta Lead site in Atlanta, Georgia. All three communities have strong historical ties and have been impacted by past practices of placing lead-contaminated soil in low-lying areas. In FY 2020, EPA Region 4 actively engaged the community, state and local governments, and stakeholder groups to communicate the dangers of lead contamination, consistent with the 2018 [Federal Action Plan to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposures and Associated Health Impacts](#). In FY 2020, EPA reached out to 3,568 residents via letter and conducted door-to-door outreach in all three communities to request permission to sample their yards. The Agency received permission to sample 653 yards and cleaned up 171 properties this fiscal year.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, EPA enhanced health and safety protocols based on CDC guidelines to continue addressing these sites. Many of these practices include social distancing and implementing innovative methods to engage the primarily low-income, minority communities at all three sites. For transparency and awareness, the Agency conveyed our enhanced protocols to local elected officials and residents through various communication methods. EPA posted newspaper and radio advertisements, videos on its websites and social media to inform residents about potential lead exposure in their communities and continue to request permission to sample residents' yards. Fact sheets were prepared in English and Spanish to address language barriers in the Chattanooga neighborhoods. EPA coordinated with school districts to test the soil in school playgrounds and local parks, as well. The Region 4 Superfund site team will continue to engage the community and clean and restore the yards in these areas.



35th Avenue property before, during, and after remediation.



House on Vance in Southside Chattanooga following contamination removal. More than 85 properties have been cleaned up this fiscal year.

St. Joseph Lead Poisoning Prevention Initiative

In St. Joseph, Missouri, EPA continued to build local capacity reduce lead poisoning in young children. This work combines several priorities: reducing exposure to lead, children's health, EJ and education. Building on recent efforts, EPA reached 100% of daycare facilities and over 600 families in the zip code with the highest levels of lead⁴ in St. Joseph, which has among the highest levels of lead in Missouri. This was accomplished by:

- Training to 30 home daycare and childcare center teachers on lead poisoning prevention.
- Conducting one-on-one meetings with daycare directors and nonprofit directors.
- Providing outreach and education materials to each childcare center and home daycare.
- Holding a demonstration outreach and education event that served 75 families and tested 17 children.
- Coordinating with United Way so that lead poisoning prevention information is included in take-home materials with every family leaving the hospital with a newborn in St. Joseph.

EPA also facilitated meetings with the St. Joseph Health Department; Kansas City Health Department; and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) staff. The collaboration resulted in HUD providing \$100,000 from their Lead Abatement and Healthy Homes program and an agreement between St. Joseph and Kansas City health departments to share funds to reduce lead hazards for low-income families living in pre-1978 housing. In addition, St. Joseph increased its commitment to address lead poisoning in young children by passing a rental property ordinance that ensures safe and healthy housing.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

EPA Released List of Disinfectants to Use Against COVID-19 Pandemic

EPA released a list of EPA-registered disinfectant products in March 2020 that qualified for use against SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Products on EPA's list qualified for use against COVID-19 through the Agency's Emerging Viral Pathogen program. This program allows product manufacturers to provide EPA with data, even in advance of an outbreak, that shows their products are effective against harder-to-kill viruses than SARS-CoV-2. Using the correct disinfectant is an important part of preventing and reducing the spread of illnesses along with other critical aspects, such as hand washing. There is no higher priority for EPA than protecting the health and safety of Americans, especially vulnerable communities where COVID-19 is having a disproportionate impact on low-income and minority communities. EPA provided this important information on disinfectant products to the public in a transparent manner to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

EPA Takes Action to Help Americans Disinfect Indoor Spaces

EPA issued [new guidance](#) to disinfect public spaces effectively and efficiently to control SARS-CoV-2 in July 2020. This guidance outlines what information registrants need to submit in order to expedite the review of requests to add electrostatic sprayer application directions to disinfectant product labels that qualify for use against SARS-CoV-2. With this guidance, EPA is ensuring offices, schools, and local governments in all communities, especially vulnerable ones, have access to as many effective and approved surface disinfectant products as possible - including those designed to disinfect large indoor spaces. The guidance also builds on EPA's [expedited review](#) of certain submissions for products intended for use against SARS-CoV-2.

Wastewater Monitoring for SARS-CoV-2 in Ohio

In partnership with the Ohio Department of Health and Ohio EPA, Agency researchers are developing and applying methods for detecting different forms of SARS-CoV-2, including live or infectious virus and the genetic marker of the virus (its RNA) in wastewater. Wastewater samples from treatment plants in Cincinnati,

⁴ Zip code 64501 had a lead level of 16% and 20% between 2014 and 2017. The national average is around 2.75 %.

Dayton, and other areas in the southwestern region of the state are being analyzed. The criteria for selecting sites includes the potential vulnerability of the community based on socioeconomic factors, helping to ensure infections are identified early in these at-risk communities. Developing reproducible methods of detection are critical to accurately inform public health decisions and are particularly important for vulnerable communities who are at greatest risk from complications after infection.

With an infectious disease like COVID-19, people may be contagious before they show any symptoms. Preliminary research from across the country and around the world indicates that monitoring wastewater for the presence of the SARS-CoV-2 RNA may be useful as a sensitive early indicator of low levels of infections in the community. Having an early warning system to inform public health officials about infection rates could be helpful to direct resources to the communities with the greatest need. The data from this research and other academic and state labs will be publicly shared on the State's Coronavirus Dashboard hosted by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and will be used by the Governor and ODH as an additional metric for determining public health advisory levels.

Region 8 Prioritizes Low-income and Minority Populations in Efforts to Reduce Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic

According to the CDC, long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. Region 8 has taken several steps to help reduce this risk by conducting outreach and providing access to information regarding safely disinfecting surfaces against COVID-19, taking steps to ensure compliance with regulations regarding the use and labeling of disinfectants, and helping communities address ancillary impacts related to food security. Some examples of Region 8's focused efforts include:

- Partnering with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease (ATSDR) to provide outreach on the safe use of disinfectants that can be used against the virus. EPA Region 8 Administrator Greg Sopkin joined ATSDR Regional Director Kai Elgethen in hosting a *Safely Reopening America: Disinfecting Public Spaces* call with the Colorado Asian Chamber of Commerce in May 2020. They also hosted a similar call, translated in Spanish, with the Colorado Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in June.
- Engaging with multiple stakeholders that are striving to address food security issues exacerbated by the pandemic in low-income and minority communities in the Region. Regional staff have worked with stakeholders in communities across the Region who are interested in the development, implementation, and enhancement of local food systems serving minority and disadvantaged residents. Staff have provided technical assistance, helped to identify potential projects, explored possible funding sources, and convened stakeholders in communities including the Globeville and Elyria-Swansea neighborhoods in Northeast Denver; Southeast Colorado Springs; Pueblo, Colorado; and Bismarck, North Dakota.
- Initiating a compliance effort in Indian Country in the Region to ensure proper disinfectant product use, marketing, and labeling. Regional compliance and enforcement staff are partnering with tribal inspectors to provide compliance assistance (and, if necessary, to take enforcement action) to address instances of false COVID-19 sterilization and disinfectant claims, unregistered disinfectants, and misapplication of disinfectants.
- Inspection of ICE facilities and prisons for compliance with disinfectant use requirements in response to increased illness in those facilities from improper ventilation during disinfection processes.
- Outreach to area K-12 school districts, including those with schools in EJ areas, and colleges and universities to provide resources for cleaning, disinfecting, and preparing for safely reopening schools in Region 8.

Addressing Air Quality Concerns in Chelsea, Massachusetts

In response to community and lawmakers' concerns, EPA and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection are working together to monitor and address potential particulate matter emissions as well as concerns about overall air quality in Chelsea, Massachusetts. Recent demolition and construction activities in Chelsea have generated airborne dust which have heightened concerns about particulate matter pollution in this city of 35,000, located next to Boston. Chelsea is a lower income, densely populated, majority Hispanic or Latinx community that hosts a large number of industrial facilities regulated by the state and EPA. In recent months, Chelsea residents have suffered the highest rates of COVID-19 infections in Massachusetts and, historically, suffer higher incidence rates of asthma and other respiratory illnesses. In the short term, EPA is loaning its state partner nine air sensors that could be very useful to understand particulate matter impacts in Chelsea. EPA and the state will work together to identify locations to collect the most representative air quality data for Chelsea's residents and will also ensure that proper air monitoring and dust suppression activities are being conducted at bridge and road demolition and construction sites to minimize airborne dust. In the longer term, EPA will work with the state to consider locating a permanent air quality monitoring station in Chelsea. EPA and the state also plan to meet virtually with city officials and community stakeholders to continue to help address Chelsea's air quality concerns.

In response to EPA's actions, Massachusetts Senator Ed Markey issued the following press statement: "The residents of Chelsea can breathe a little easier today . . . Chelsea residents have faced the unjust burden of multiple pollution sources for too long. They deserve the right to air quality monitoring in their community, and I am glad the EPA has heeded our request to take this first step to responding to dangerous inequalities in air quality." EPA is committed to ensuring that the residents of Chelsea benefit from a safe environment and clean air to breathe.

EPA Responds to Tribal Needs Regarding COVID-19 Pandemic

Through the Tribal Infrastructure Task Force (ITF), the Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery (ORCR) worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to coordinate assistance to tribes who lacked COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE) for their solid waste and recycling sanitation workers. EPA Regions 2, 4, 5, 7 and 10 worked through ORCR to coordinate with FEMA the distribution of 31,500 cloth face masks that went to 63 tribes for use by their solid waste operators in the lower 48 states. EPA Region 6 worked directly with FEMA to obtain masks. EPA Region 10 and ORCR overcame logistical constraints to help FEMA supply 6,000 cloth masks for distribution through the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council to solid waste operators in Alaska Native Villages and First Nations in their service area, covering a combined total of 75 Alaska Native Villages and First Nations. ORCR also coordinated with our ITF partners, including U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Rural Development, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), and the Indian Health Service (IHS) to provide technical assistance to tribes and amplify funding opportunities related to COVID-19.

- The Office of Emergency Management helped conduct several activities to assist communities in their COVID-19 response, including:
- Coordinated with EPA Regions and FEMA to manage the distribution of 31,500 cloth face masks to solid and hazardous waste employees for 63 tribes in the lower 48 states.
- Developed disinfection strategies for communities, as outlined in the EPA/Center for Disease Control (CDC) [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#).
- Developed technical guidance from the internal Technical Working Group to federal partners as well as state and local entities on COVID-19 issues.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM

One objective of the EJ Program is to advance the integration of EJ principles throughout EPA to support the efforts of communities with EJ concerns. The ultimate goal is to achieve real, concrete improvements in environmental and public health outcomes in communities with EJ concerns.



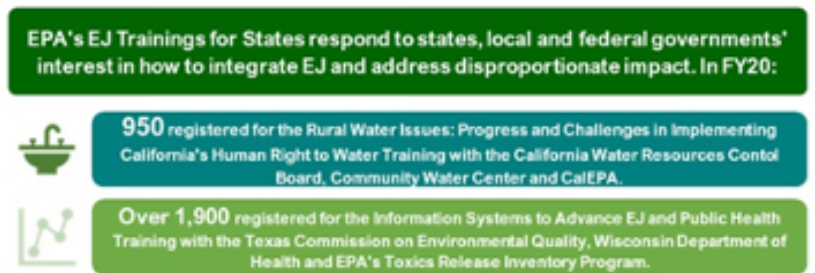
FY20 EJ Program Highlights.

Strategic Priority 1: Supporting the Integration of EJ Considerations into EPA Activities.

In FY 2020, common training topics included performing effective community engagement, using the EJSCREEN mapping tool, and including EJ in emergency response. The EJ Program also consulted on integrating EJ into EPA rulemaking, permitting, enforcement, and community revitalization. This resulted in stronger integration of EJ considerations, including direct engagement efforts in underserved communities, the addition of EJ factors to program plans, and increased use of the EJSCREEN tool after providing trainings.

Strategic Priority 2: Collaborate with Governmental Partners and other External Partners.

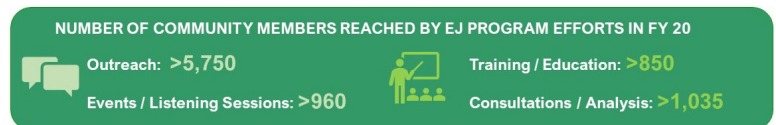
EPA EJ Program staff collaborate with external stakeholder groups to provide consultations, conduct trainings and exchange information. These partnerships focus on integrating EJ within partners' policies and programs, collaborating on general EJ work, leveraging resources, and planning work in communities with EJ concerns. FY 2020 highlights include the [EJ Trainings for States webinars](#) and EJSCREEN training for staff at FEMA for improved consideration of EJ in their emergency and recovery work. Collaborations also involved leveraging resources for underserved and vulnerable communities to help mitigate the cumulative impacts of COVID-19.



Strategic Priority 3: Support and Engage with Communities with EJ Concerns. The ultimate purpose of the EJ Program is to support communities with EJ concerns. In addition to providing technical and financial assistance through EJ grants in FY 2020, the EJ Program engaged with community members in a variety of ways. Here are the top activities and number of community members reached:

Specific activity highlights include:

- Convened events at conferences to provide education, assist with leveraging resources, and provide networking opportunities with stakeholders for EJ community members.
- Conducted outreach and education for tribes, rural and other EJ communities on using effective cleaning and disinfecting products for indoor environments to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- Engaged with several near-port communities to provide tools for collaborating with port stakeholders and to support their efforts to address concerns with local air emissions, as part of EPA's Ports Initiative.
- Consulted and/or partnered with governmental stakeholders to engage EJ community members to



FY 20 EJ Program highlights on supporting and engaging vulnerable communities.

gather public comments on a variety of proposed projects, permits, and revitalization efforts. This work promotes meaningful engagement, so that EJ communities have a say about what happens in their communities.

EJ GRANT FUNDING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR COMMUNITIES

The Office of Environmental Justice manages EPA's EJ grants, which support overburdened communities and build partnerships to improve the environment and public health. Since 1994, more than \$40 million in EJ grant funding has been awarded to more than 1,500 low income and/or minority communities across the United States. In FY 2020, Congress provided additional funding for EJ grants. This funding coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has devastated low-income, minority and tribal communities.

There were more than 70 active EJ grants when the pandemic struck. The majority of EJ grantees are small, grassroots organizations who fight on the frontlines to address the needs of those who have the least. These grassroots organizations are critical in alerting local governments and authorities to the needs of local communities, even more so during COVID-19. Many EJ grantees have realigned resources, reimagined outreach methods, and changed daily protocols to better respond to the needs of the people they serve. In turn, the EJ grants program continues to provide flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of grantees as they implement their projects. More than half of all active EJ grantees requested and/or received an extension of their project period. EPA staff also worked directly with many EJ grantees to restructure community outreach and training activities to maintain social distance. This included relocating community events to open-air environments, hosting small training groups, and using virtual meetings.

“Environmental justice grants aim to support public education, training, and emergency planning for communities across the country impacted by COVID-19, regardless of their zip code,” said EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler. “These grants are part of EPA’s effort to actively fight the COVID-19 pandemic that is having a disproportionate impact on low-income and minority communities.”

EPA also revived the [State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreement](#) (SEJCA) program, which provides funding to support eligible entities (state, tribal, local, and territorial governments) to work collaboratively with underserved communities to understand, promote and integrate approaches to provide meaningful and measurable improvements to public health and/or the environment in underserved communities. To support the nationwide effort against the COVID-19 pandemic, EPA gave special consideration to applications proposing actions to address the impacts of COVID-19 on communities with environmental justice concerns, including adding an additional \$1 million to support more grant proposals focused on partners’ efforts to combat the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people of color, low-income and indigenous communities.

In FY 2020, the EJ program awarded \$4.46 million in grant funding through:

- **10 SEJCA Grants.** All levels of government must be responsive to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on underserved communities. EPA competed our SEJCA grant for the first time in ten years and additionally expanded eligibility to include state governments, tribal governments, local governments, and US territories. These grants are for up to \$200,000 over a two-year period. 90% of the awarded projects address COVID-19 concerns through a range of project activities, including public education, training, emergency planning, investigations, home inspections, and wastewater treatment. Read the descriptions of the COVID-19 projects [here](#). This program received \$1 million in funding from other EPA resources in addition to the \$1 million allocated through the EJ program budget.



- **18 Collaborative Problem-Solving Grants (CPS).** EPA used expanded appropriations to support an additional 8 grantees to the traditional 10 awarded \$120,000 every two years. These grants help community-based organizations build collaborative partnerships with other local stakeholders to improve local environmental and public health issues. Each EJCPs grantee is required to use elements of EPA's [Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model](#) in their project. Read the descriptions of the new CPS projects [here](#).
- **12 additional Environmental Justice Small Grants (EJSG).** Over 200 community-based organizations applied to the 2019 EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant (EJSG) opportunity, the most in years. These grants are for up to \$30,000 for a one-year project to help communities understand and address exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks. Last year, 50 small grants were awarded and in FY 2020 an additional 12 were awarded due to the additional appropriation. Read the descriptions of the additional EJSG projects [here](#).

COVID-19 Impacts on EJ Grants

There were more than 70 active environmental justice grants when the pandemic struck. The majority of all EJ grantees are small, grassroots organizations who fight on the frontlines to address the needs of those who have the least. These grassroots organizations are critical in alerting local governments and authorities to the needs of local communities, even more so during COVID-19. Many EJ grantees have realigned resources, reimagined outreach methods, and changed daily protocols to better respond to the needs of the people they serve. In turn, the EJ grants program continues to provide flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of grantees as they implement their projects. More than half of all active EJ grantees requested and/or received an extension of their project period. EPA staff also worked directly with many EJ grantees to restructure community outreach and training activities to maintain social distance. This included relocating community events to open-air environments, hosting small training groups, and using virtual meetings.

Clean Water Project for the Winchester Heights Community in Southeast Arizona

In FY2020 work under a two-year EJCPs grant to the Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center (SEAHEC) for *Proyecto Agua Limpia (Project Clean Water)* was brought to a successful completion. In May 2018, EPA awarded a two-year EJCPs grant to SEAHEC for *Proyecto Agua Limpia (Project Clean Water)*. This project focused on Winchester Heights, a colonia in Cochise County served by a small community water system and lacks basic public infrastructure, such as safe housing, transportation, streetlights and paved roads. The grant supported SEAHEC establishing a cadre of community health workers to help the Winchester Heights community address their environmental health concerns. The grant allowed SEAHEC to establish a strong collaboration with project partners and support the development of the Winchester Heights Health Organization (WHHO).

Through this effort, SEAHEC partnered with the University of Arizona to assess community members' risk perception of their water. They used a community-based participatory approach to quantify bacteria and heavy metal concentrations in household drinking water. They trained community health workers to collect, analyze, and interpret bacteria and trace metal results from drinking water sources, and then present the results back to the community. Community members worked with SEAHEC public health interns to develop a strategic plan for addressing water quality issues identified. EPA provided technical guidance on the project including the development of a Quality Assurance Project Plan to ensure reliable data was produced. SEAHEC and the WHHO will inform on future success on the completed EJCPs project.

EJ Small Grant Helps Yield Results for Española Community in New Mexico

Growing your own food without access to irrigation is not an option for many area residents in Española. EPA awarded Tewa Women United⁵ (TWU) an EJ Small Grant to support a demonstration garden project planted in Valdez Park on a hillside behind Española City Hall in 2015. What was once a barren slope with erosion

⁵ TWU is a New Mexico-based non-profit founded and led by Native women focused on ending all forms of violence against Native women and girls, Mother Earth and promoting peace in New Mexico.

problems is now a thriving garden with more than 200 varieties of medicinal and companion plants. The EJ grant supported TWU’s development of the Healing Foods Oasis, an outdoor classroom that supports native food traditions and languages, and educates visitors about water conservation, small-scale farming and the value of cooperation between people from different backgrounds. Using traditional dry-land farming techniques and permaculture principles, this fruit tree terrace garden provides many benefits for the community. It solves erosion problems on the hillside, while also capturing and harvesting precious rainwater. The garden is accessible to Española residents and the surrounding tricultural communities of the northern Río Grande Valley. Since breaking ground in 2016 through FY 2020, TWU has leveraged their EPA EJ Small Grant into over \$222,000 in grants from city, corporate, and non-profit sponsors, \$45,000 in volunteer hours, and \$16,000 in in-kind donations.



Landscape before project development.



After - Rose of Amaranth, indigenous grain staple.

Helping Communities Access Federal Funding

Environmental justice nonprofit and community organizations often do not have the capacity to compete for much-needed grant funding. To respond to that need, EPA Region 7 hosted an annual workshop on grant writing and grants management in FY 2020. One hundred-twenty participants representing all the states in Region 7 and 2 tribes learned how to apply for an EPA brownfield, EJ, pollution prevention, environmental education and the Department of Housing and Urban Development grants. Participants learned how to create project descriptions, develop a budget, complete proposal requirements, and engage communities and partners. As a result of this support, EPA and HUD are receiving more and stronger grant applications. This workshop was co-sponsored by Kansas State University’s Technical Assistance to Brownfields Program; EPA Region 7’s Brownfields and Environmental Justice Programs, and Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, & Nebraska Brownfields Cleanup Programs. EPA Region 7 also hosted a Grants Management Workshop for all the current EJ Small Grant and EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving cooperative agreements recipients. It focused on federal grants management regulations, quality assurance, best practices, success stories and FAQs.



Trekia Henry talks about HUD resources at the October 2019 EPA R7 4-state region grants workshop.



Jacob Burney, EJ Grants Program Manager, talks about EPA environmental justice grants at the Oct 2019 EPA R7 4-state region grants workshop.



Region 7 Administrator Jim Gulliford welcomes everyone to the grants management workshop.

Technical Assistance Services to Communities Enhances Community Participation

Communities often need technical assistance, training and environmental education to better understand the science, regulations and policies of environmental issues and EPA actions. EPA’s Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) program provides this independent assistance at no cost to vulnerable communities. Through TASC, scientists, engineers and other professionals explain technical findings to a community and answer their questions. These efforts promote a key principle of EJ – being able to meaningfully participate in environmental decision-making with government agencies and other stakeholders. TASC services are provided in response to a community’s request and are determined on a project-specific

basis. In FY 2020, EPA provided approximately \$150,000 in funding to support technical assistance to support four communities. This work included efforts that took place in the colonias in El Paso County, Texas, the community of Laguna Nueva, California, the Confederated Tribe of Warm Springs, Oregon, and the neighborhoods located near the Philadelphia Energy Solutions (formerly Sunoco) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The neighborhoods surrounding the former Sunoco Philadelphia Refinery, now known as the Philadelphia Energy Solutions Refining Marketing (PES) LLC Complex (Site), have faced EJ issues related to air emissions from the refinery. Philadelphia residents have concerns about the impact that remaining contamination may have on public health and the environment. The population within the 3-mile radius of the site is 60% minority as compared to 23% for the state, and 45% low-income as compared to 30% for the state. After a production unit explosion in June 2019, PES stopped operations. Since the refinery has stopped operating, the area's air quality is expected to improve significantly.

In FY 2020, TASC support focused on helping the community better understand the information in various technical remedial investigation reports and if there are specific areas or issues the community/adjacent to the site should be concerned about. TASC presented a user-friendly report to community members and answered questions at a virtual meeting in August 2020. The report covered the contaminants of concern, future land use scenarios, and state non-residential standards for soil and groundwater. It also shared key findings and discussed common cleanup methods at refinery sites. As a result of this technical assistance, community members received information about the site in a clear, understandable way. EPA Region 3, the state, and the city have been working with Sunoco and Evergreen Resources Group, LLC (Evergreen) on remedial investigations of the areas of interest at the site. Community members now have the foundation to participate more fully in the future cleanup decision-making process.

Superfund Technical Assistance

The Superfund remedial program provides independent technical assistance services and programs to communities to help people better understand technical issues related to cleanup and key considerations for a site's future use. With this assistance, communities are then in a better position to share their concerns and priorities with EPA.

In FY 2020, EPA awarded a total of \$85,000 in Technical Assistance Grants (TAGs) to 3 communities, which provide funding for non-profit organizations to hire technical advisors to help communities interpret and understand technical information about their site.

In FY 2020, EPA provided support through the Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) Program to 30 Superfund site communities, 7 additional Navajo Nation sites. The TASC Program provides scientists, engineers and other professionals to communities to explain and review technical information related to Superfund work so that they may meaningfully participate in the cleanup decision-making process.

Office of Community Revitalization Technical Assistance

In FY 2020, the Office of Community Revitalization (OCR) - along with governmental, community-based organizations and private sector partners - delivered technical assistance to more than 30 communities across the United States. This work included developing action plans and identifying strategies to support reinvestment and reuse of existing community assets (brownfields, open space, main streets, etc.) and infrastructure (water, sewer, road). These efforts supported inclusive economic growth and protecting environmental quality. Three examples of this work are shared below.

Shoshone-Bannock Tribes

In FY 2020, OCR worked with EPA Region 10 OAR's Heat Island Reduction program to provide environmentally sustainable design assistance to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes in southern Idaho. The tribes selected a site in front of the casino/hotel that is currently a dirt lot with a former gas station. The

site is located across the highway from the Tribal Museum and serves as an entrance to the community from Interstate 15. The goals for redesigning this site included: improving water quality; adding plants and reducing heat island impacts with removal of impervious surfaces. The tribe also wanted to provide a safe and comfortable walking and gathering spaces for visitors, tourists, and local residents, including a safe connection to the Tribal Museum. In addition, they wanted to create a landscape design reflective of the Shoshone-Bannock culture.

In FY 2020, EPA brought together the tribes' Departments of Energy, Planning, and Transportation. Using the Tribes' Facebook Live, a virtual design charette included 35 tribal members participating and providing feedback. In addition, a video of the design presentation has been viewed over 1,300 times and included additional comments from tribal members. Feedback included adding a fire pit for traditional cooking demonstrations, an amphitheater for performances, and specific ideas for indigenous plants to include in the landscape design. EPA will finalize the designs in a report for the tribe in October 2020 and provide support for implementing the preferred design option.



Figure 1 This plan view design, called Snake River, shows the preferred option selected by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to create a new park in front of the casino-hotel.



Figure 2: This drawing shows features of the Snake River design, including interpretive signage, a fire pit for community gathering, play spaces for kids, and native plants for restoring grasslands.



Figure 3 These images show how the Snake River design could be implemented to reflect the tribes' culture, e.g., indigenous plants and local art, community gathering spaces and renewable energy options.

St. Louis, Missouri

The Opportunity Zone Tax Incentive promotes private sector investment in economically distressed communities. In FY 2020, OCR partnered with the St. Louis Development Corporation and the North Star Community Partners in St. Louis, Missouri, to develop strategies to attract investment in North Side communities and its Opportunity Zones. The North Star Community Partners are comprised of representatives from community development corporations, faith-based organizations, and a nonprofit organization that supports minority-owned small businesses. The technical assistance built on the community's past planning and current redevelopment projects underway to revitalize neighborhoods to include more housing options and amenities for community residents. In FY 2020, EPA and the North Star Community Partners convened city, state, and federal partners to address community needs, such as site preparation and cleanup barriers, as well as navigate and access public funds and incentives. All of these efforts will help the St. Louis community plan for a thriving and equitable future.

Douglas, Arizona

Douglas, Arizona is a predominately Hispanic port community that has experienced disinvestment. In FY 2020, OCR partnered with the U.S. General Services Administration, to work with residents and local officials to develop strategies to advance reinvestment in downtown Douglas. The goal is to attract more amenities, housing, tourism and cultural experiences. Through a series of virtual community work sessions, OCR advanced state and local efforts to explore options to modernize the existing Raul H. Castro Port of Entry and redirect commercial crossings to a new facility four miles west of the city. Collectively, these efforts will help alleviate the high volume of commercial traffic and the constant flow of oversize and overweight trucks through the heart of downtown Douglas (and neighboring city, Agua Prieta). As a result of this effort, the existing downtown port will support a safer and more comfortable pedestrian experience, while the new commercial port will accommodate heavier commercial and freight traffic.

Recreation Economy for Rural Communities

In FY 2020, EPA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Northern Border Regional Commission [sponsored Recreation Economy for Rural Communities](#). This program helps cities and towns across the country protect the environment and human health by engaging with local partners to reinvest in existing neighborhoods and Main Streets through outdoor recreation. Small towns can boost air quality and water quality and focus development downtown by conserving forests and other natural lands and making them available for outdoor recreation. Promoting outdoor recreation can also create jobs and offer new opportunities for people to connect with the natural world. In FY 2020, Recreation Economy for Rural Communities worked with 10 partner communities, including Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

Glenwood Springs is a small, diverse, rural community located on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains that is close to the White River National Forest and other recreation assets. Approximately 30% of the population of Glenwood Springs are of Hispanic descent. The community approached EPA to help identify opportunities to boost employment opportunities for town residents, protect the area's scenic assets, and address the shortage of affordable housing in the community. EPA staff and consultants worked closely with local stakeholders to convene a series of workshops to develop an action plan to strengthen community revitalization through the recreation economy. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, workshops were held virtually. EPA made a point to minimize the digital divide and engage the Latinx community in forming solutions to achieve community goals and objectives.

Community-Driven Solutions

Community Driven Solutions (CDS) focuses on continuous improvement of EPA's internal coordination of Agency activities that are regularly implemented at the community level to more regularly achieve beneficial outcomes in those communities. The CDS workgroup, co-led by OEJ and OCR, is set up to build on and continuously improve the way the Agency achieves improved environmental and human health outcomes at the community level by enhancing communication, coordination and collaboration across EPA programs operating at the community level. CDS is focused on refining the practice of working at the community level by breaking down EPA silos and taking advantage of our ability to convene multiple external partners, such as other federal agencies, local government, tribes, philanthropic foundations, etc.

To that end, CDS emphasizes making EPA's community-based work more effective and efficient and on integrating the experience and resources of EPA's community-based programs with the vast number of problems and opportunities that present themselves when our regulatory programs engage in community-based work. CDS helps to foster cross-program collaboration to support the Agency's mission achievement as well as our ability to take advantage of new programs such as Opportunity Zones and to better respond to community needs, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. CDS presents an opportunity to strengthen EPA's ability to use community-based work to meet agency commitments, now and for decades to come.

In addition to improving the alignment of EPA's programs and resources, CDS better leverages resources from our federal, state, tribal, local and other partners to advance the goals of communities. In FY 2020, OEJ and OCR facilitated headquarters and regional office coordination and enhance community-facing priorities including Opportunity Zones, the Agency's Lead Action Plan and compliance assistance for small drinking water systems.



SECTION 2 – More Effective Partnerships

Having more effective partnerships is the second goal of EPA's strategic plan. Collaborating with stakeholders and communities in a spirit of trust and collaboration yields better environmental and health outcomes. EPA collaborates with federal, state, tribal and local governments; indigenous peoples; communities and community-based organizations; and academia on various EJ efforts. These diverse partnerships create a more coordinated, holistic and effective approach in achieving EJ for vulnerable communities.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice

The [Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice](#) (EJ IWG) is chaired by the EPA Administrator and consists of 17 federal agencies and White House offices. The EJ IWG facilitates the active involvement of all federal agencies to implement the 1994 [Executive Order 12898](#) and provides a forum for agencies to collectively advance EJ principles. The EJ IWG also works to increase community capacity to implement innovative and comprehensive solutions that address EJ issues. Highlights of these FY 2020 interagency efforts, among others,⁶ included:

- Working on recommendations from the [2019 GAO Report on Environmental Justice](#) to enhance federal agencies' planning and coordination on EJ.
- Conducting a NEPA Webinar on Best Practices for Meaningful Engagement for EJ Without Public Meetings with over 1,940 participants. Panelists included representatives from the Department of Energy, Federal Highway Administration and EPA. [Click here](#) to watch the webinar and view the [slides](#).



Chip Hughes, NIEHS, Mayor Connie Thomas of Orange Park, FL, and NEJAC Chairperson Richard Moore attending the EJ IWG focus group discussion on EJ concerns of underserved communities in natural disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

6 For more information on FY 2020 EJ IWG progress, look for the forthcoming EJ IWG FY 2020 Report here.

- Partnering with other agencies and health care organizations to leverage resources, expertise and supplies for preventing complications from diabetes before, during and following hurricanes in Puerto Rico.
- Hosting a Listening Session on Natural Disasters with National Institute of Environmental Health Services and Mayor Connie Thomas of Orange Park, Florida. Over 40 participants attended this session that was held at the February 2020 NEJAC meeting. It focused on how to enhance EJ integration into the natural disaster recovery framework.
- Recruiting and selecting students for the Educate Motivate Innovate Program, who will present at a future National Environmental Justice Conference. The goal of this effort is to engage the next generation of EJ leaders and expand partnerships with Minority Serving Institutions.

The EPA-HUD Memorandum of Understanding

Under a 2017 Memorandum of Understanding between the Superfund program and the Office of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Environment and Energy, both offices share information and discuss issues related to HUD public housing and multifamily project-based rental assistance housing near Superfund sites. This work has benefited residents living in HUD-housing around the United States and facilitated EPA and HUD coordination. For example, after the flooding in Midland, Michigan, in May 2020 due to a dam failure, EPA met with HUD to inform them about potential contamination related to the Tittabawasee River, Saginaw River & Bay Superfund site. The information shared helped HUD make informed decisions about the suitability of sites for HUD funding and in their engagement with local housing authorities.

Over the past year, EPA has also facilitated training of HUD headquarters and regional staff on Superfund topics, coordinated on site-specific concerns at multiple sites, and shared site locations, contamination, site remedy, human exposure, site reuse, and other site-specific information. EPA and HUD continue to coordinate on updating policy to share information on liability and public health concerns of communities living on or near Superfund sites. EPA and HUD continue to consult with other offices within our respective agencies as well as the interagency on an as-needed basis to ensure we are addressing shared concerns.

Federal Interagency Interfaith Collaboration for Vulnerable Communities (IIC) Pilot in Shamokin, Pennsylvania

Since 2019, the [Interagency Interfaith Collaboration for Vulnerable Communities](#) (IIC) has worked with the [Faith Alliance for Revitalization \(FAR\)](#), an interfaith and multi-stakeholder collaborative partnership to rebuild and revitalize Shamokin, Pennsylvania. For over 70 years, the city has experienced economic and social decline due to the loss of mining and textile industries, leading to state receivership and development of a City [Recovery Plan](#) in 2015. In [2018](#), approximately 29.6% of the population was below the poverty line, many living in the city's Opportunity Zone. Some of the city's key environmental and public health issues include acid mine drainage, brownfields, the need for green space/beautification, and flood control. In FY 2020 the IIC, which includes representatives from EPA, USDA/FS, Department of Labor, and Department of the Interior coordinated and hosted trainings, workshops and other activities to help the Shamokin community build a brighter future:

- In November 2019, EPA conducted an [Energy Star for Congregations](#) workshop for houses of worship and faith-based organizations in and around the city. Representatives from six houses of worship attended the [one and a half day workshop](#). Topics included the Energy Star [Action Workbook for Congregations](#), no-cost/low-cost actions for savings, using the [Treasure Map for Worship Facilities](#), and an overview of the EPA [Supporting Healthy Houses of Worship](#) document. An "Interfaith Energy Star Team" formed and conducted an assessment before pausing operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Team is planning to restart after the pandemic to help identify energy, water and waste savings in other houses of worship in the city.
- Approximately 165 residents attended the EPA facilitated [Shamokin Community Rebuilding Workshop](#)

[in February 2020](#), which led to a set of community priority goals and implementation actions. Workshop sessions included a youth session at the local high school, a [community tour](#), an evening kick-off session, and sessions to refine the community's goals, action steps/activities, and identification of community assets. In the following months, EPA also assisted with developing the [Shamokin Community Rebuilding Action Plan](#).

- In April 2020, the community used an EPA digitized map, a tool from the Workshop, to post an online map on a local community nonprofit's Facebook page to help Shamokin residents facing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The map showed the locations of faith-based organizations, non-profit organizations and local businesses that could provide help to residents with food, clothing and other essentials.

“It has been inspiring to see the citizens, faith communities, businesses, and government agencies come together in support of this revitalization plan. Even though COVID-19 interrupted implementation, the working groups continued to meet and now, as restrictions are lifting, the pace to implement the action plan is increasing. The enthusiasm for the revitalization effort, especially at EPA and SEDA-COG, never flagged. It is a wonderful partnership that continues to strive for a better tomorrow for Shamokin.”

– Friar Rich Rome, SEDA-COG Press Release

Interagency Interfaith Collaboration for Vulnerable Communities – Webinar Series

In FY 2020, EPA Region 7 created the St. Louis Interagency Interfaith Collaboration for Vulnerable Communities. This team of faith leaders from St. Louis and local community representatives was formed in response to a 2019 meeting with EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler, Regional Administrator Jim Gulliford, and St. Louis faith leaders. Faith leaders shared their challenges associated with economic strain of keeping their doors open aggravated by high utility bills, maintenance and upkeep in aging structures, concerns regarding healthy buildings, and aspirations of building renovations. After a series of monthly meetings, the group developed a training for houses of worship focused on cost-saving energy conservation, information regarding resources and technical assistance, and healthy church best practices. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the training was presented virtually in September 2020.

STATE GOVERNMENTS

“Virtual” Air Permit Training for Low-income/Rural community in North Carolina hosted by NCDEQ in Partnership with EPA

EPA Region 4 partnered with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) to address a complaint that emerged from a small, self-identified EJ community in rural North Carolina. The citizens were concerned about the proposed air permits for two asphalt plants planned to be constructed in their county. The Anderson community members indicated that local elderly residents have pre-existing health conditions that may be exacerbated by the potential additional air emissions. The initial complaint investigation revealed the need for innovative and proactive outreach. A working group, comprised of EPA offices and NCDEQ, was formed to raise community awareness of the Clean Air Act, NCDEQ's minor source air permitting program, and the public participation processes.

As a result, the NCDEQ determined they would pivot from the pre-existing air permit guidance for industry to a new focus on communities. The state took the lead in championing a first-time air permitting virtual workshop for citizens that was posted online. In less than three weeks, a planning team prepared and delivered a successful community-based virtual training. The educational presentation targeted approximately a dozen local community leaders and stakeholder organizations, with a question and answer session to address the state's permitting process, the role of the state and federal government in that process, and tips for effective public participation. This custom outreach included a number of EPA programs and North

Carolina state offices. As a result, the rural citizen leaders and community-based organizations are much better prepared to publicly participate in shared environmental decision-making on local air permits. This multi-government approach may be a useful model to assist other states support communities with EJ concerns. In addition, NCDEQ denied the local draft permits based on modeling analysis that NAAQS would not be met.

Chesapeake Bay Program Releases Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Strategy

The Chesapeake Bay Program includes the six bay states, the District of Columbia, EPA, other federal agencies and partner organizations. In FY 2020, their [Diversity Workgroup finalized its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice \(DEIJ\) Strategy with the help of an independent consultant](#). The [DEIJ Statement](#) was announced at the annual [Chesapeake Executive Council meeting](#). This statement reaffirmed the commitment to embrace diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in all areas of the Chesapeake Bay Program. To accompany this statement, the [Principals' Staff Committee](#) announced a [DEIJ Action Statement](#) with actionable and timebound commitments to implement the recommendations in the DEIJ Strategy. Recommendations in the strategy included:

- Building relationships with the federally recognized tribes and underrepresented groups, including but not limited to communities of color and low-income neighborhoods.
- Incorporating community leaders' input into decision-making and implementation.
- Advancing DEIJ in implementation of restoration activities and grantmaking.
- Elevating and prioritizing DEIJ in watershed restoration outreach, materials, activities and events.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Building Capacity and Raising Awareness Among the Local Workforce and Overburdened Communities in Puerto Rico

Many residents are still unemployed or under-employed since Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated Puerto Rico in the fall of 2017. In December 2019, EPA co-hosted Lead-Mold-Asbestos Awareness Seminars and grant training workshops across six municipalities: San Juan, Ponce, Humacao, Arecibo, Mayaguez, and San Sebastian. These seminars and workshops were coordinated by EPA's Healthy Buildings Long-Term Disaster Recovery Collaborative (HBLDRC) in the Caribbean and the Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce. About 500 representatives from municipalities, universities, local agencies, NGOs, industry, trade associations and the general public attended. The awareness seminars provided an overview of the Lead-Mold-Asbestos regulations/guidance, remediation/abatement best practices, and addressed the increased need for trained and certified workers and their training requirements. Information on current training assets that exist in Puerto Rico were provided. A key component of the HBLDRC is to raise awareness among the local unemployed and underemployed workforce and train them for environmental skilled trades, including, promoting job placement strategies such as Community Benefit Agreements within the municipalities and local governments. The grant training workshops provided a two-hour hands-on-training on Grants.Gov by focusing on key tips to search for appropriate grant opportunities and how to submit successful federal grant applications.

TRIBAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Region 8 Focuses on Improving Environment and Health in Overburdened Communities in Indian Country Through Compliance and Enforcement

There are 28 Tribal Nations in Region 8, encompassing over 22.8 million acres. Many communities in Indian country are overburdened and underserved. Region 8 made significant progress during FY 2020 in protecting public health and the environment through its focused compliance and technical assistance and enforcement activities. Some examples include:

- Region 8 staff gave several pesticide presentations at the annual Wyoming Pesticides Applicator Certification and Recertification Course in January 2020. EPA presentation topics included updates on FIFRA Worker Protection Standards, the application of pesticides on the Wind River Reservation, and e-commerce.
- In October 2018 new Underground Storage Tank (UST) regulations became effective in Indian country. Region 8 inspectors identified significant non-compliance with these regulations during the FY 2019 inspection season. As a result, EPA sent informal Notices of Violation to 49 UST facilities in overburdened communities in Indian country in FY 2019/FY 2020. The UST Program worked collaboratively over the past year to return 24 of those facilities to compliance resulting in better protection of human health and the environment.
- Region 8 collaborated successfully with Anadarko Minerals Inc. to clean up and remediate an area impacted by a discharge of 55,000 barrels of produced water into an unnamed tributary of Little Porcupine Creek on the Fort Peck Reservation and complete necessary revisions to their spill prevention plan. This successful resolution will help facilitate negotiations between Anadarko Minerals, Inc. and the Fort Peck Tribe to transfer ownership of the entire oil field to the tribe.
- Region 8 successfully resolved violations of waste management regulations at two salvage yards located in overburdened communities on the Rosebud Sioux and Fort Peck Reservations. The consent agreements included spent lead acid battery management activities that will ensure protection from potential lead exposure from improper management of batteries.
- In August 2020, Region 8 issued a Consent Agreement with penalties to correct noncompliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act at the Blackfeet Community Hospital Public Water System. This action incorporated input from the Blackfeet Tribe and resulted in the system providing safe drinking water to individuals served by the Hospital.
- Region 8 collaborated with tribal stakeholders and Indian Health Service personnel to provide technical assistance and training to resolve numerous public health concerns on the Crow reservation. For example, Region 8 helped address multiple sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) from manholes, pipes, and lift stations that have exposed residents to untreated wastewater in public spaces and worked with the Crow Tribe to address noncompliance at its three Public Water Systems.
- Region 8 issued an Emergency Order in response to a potential imminent and substantial endangerment at the tribally owned Rocky Boy Rural Water System located on the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana. The Order required measures to address and prevent future entry of a bacterial vector into the water supply and required the System to distribute a boil water advisory and provide bottled water to the impacted community.

Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa and EPA Revitalize Contaminated Housing Complex to Address Disproportionate Impacts Faced by Residents

The Turtle Mountain Reservation (pop. 8,565) is located near the Canadian border in north central North Dakota in geographic and economic isolation. In part due to its location, the Tribe suffers from chronically high unemployment (59.45% in 2016 according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs) and over 40% of families live below the poverty line. Among other challenges, the Tribe has hundreds of families on a waiting list to move into

its insufficient and dilapidated housing stock. One such neighborhood is L'BelCour, which is a 21-structure residential complex built in the 1960's in Belcourt, North Dakota. In various states of disrepair, many of these multifamily housing units have become vacant and some have burned. According to the Tribe, these partially abandoned homes, although boarded up, are being broken into and being used to conduct illegal activities related to drug activity, theft and vandalism. These sites pose a danger by attracting the attention and curiosity of children.

L'BelCour is representative of the disproportionate environmental impacts faced by Turtle Mountain residents more broadly. Abandoned structures dot the Reservation and many residents live in dilapidated housing that pose threats related to lead, asbestos and mold exposure, as well as exposure to open dumps and a poorly funded solid waste management program. In partnership with the Tribe, EPA began assessing L'BelCour units under its Targeted Brownfields Assessment Program in 2017 and subsequently awarded \$1,200,000 in competitive cleanup grants between 2018-2020 to abate 12 of the 21 structures. Going beyond cleanup to address the underlying need for healthy housing; in 2019 EPA began convening monthly coordination meetings between EPA, HUD and the Tribe to plan for the systematic demolition and replacement of L'BelCour residences. Thanks in part to this coordination, a \$3,000,000 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act grant from HUD was secured in July 2020.

“The impact on the community is multifaceted... such as the safety factor addressed by the removal of dangerous structures and the construction of replacement units to assist in alleviating the overcrowded conditions in the Turtle Mountain Reservation,” stated Becky Phelps, Turtle Mountain Housing Authority Director. Current and future efforts to safely rebuild all 21 structures remain the central objective for the L'BelCour community. We are excited about the recent progress and look forward to continuing cleanup work on this large housing project. Cleanup and redevelopment of L'BelCour is one of our top tribal priorities,” said Ray Reed, Turtle Mountain Brownfields Coordinator.

Seldovia, Alaska: “You Survived a Natural Disaster, Now Grab Your EPB”

In FY 2020, EPA awarded the Seldovia Village Tribe an EJ Small Grant to educate and prepare the residents of Seldovia Village and the city of Seldovia for potential natural disasters. In July 2020, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck the Alaska Peninsula threatening small rural towns like Seldovia. Accessible only by boat and small plane the predominantly Alaska Native and Caucasian community is highly vulnerable to earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions. Through an EJ Small grant, the community is better prepared for natural disasters by developing emergency plans and receiving emergency preparedness buckets (EPB) in their “Ready Set Go” training.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the emergency preparedness training continued and accomplished its goals. In person participants were issued N-95 masks while others were able to participate online. The community developed a Tribal Hazard Mitigation Plan in October 2019. Training participants were educated on Epidemics-Pandemics, Household Emergency Plans, Geologic Hazards, Fire Hazards, Emergency Responses, Generators, and Disaster Planning. Participants also sampled emergency rations meals and developed emergency plans for families and pets. Over 120 residents attended the training, with 90% of the participants expressing increased knowledge of threats to their community, through their “Ready Set Go” feedback cards.

The success of this project was in large part due to the partners involved including EMT's, Medivac flight companies, local fire and local police



Stacking boxes of Emergency Preparedness Material.

departments, and FEMA. In addition, Ground Truth Alaska for Geologic Hazards and the University of Alaska Fairbanks educated participants on inundation mapping and the risk and impact of earthquakes. The July 2020 earthquake gave partners the opportunity to implement plans developed in the training and has increased the community's ability to respond to future natural disasters.

Partnering to Advance the American Recycling System

In November 2019, EPA convened EPA's second Recycling Summit on America Recycles Day to address the major challenges facing the U.S. recycling system. Recycling provides significant environmental and economic benefits. It conserves natural resources, strengthens our economy, and creates jobs. These benefits are critically important to communities, including those with EJ concerns. The Summit engaged executives and leaders from across the recycling value chain to build on their success over the last year and commit to continuing to work together through implementation of a national framework to advance domestic recycling. Representatives from the National Tribal Operations Council were among the government, non-profit, and private sector executives and leaders who convened and committed to undertake actions to improve the recycling system. The 2019 Summit was a chance to highlight the successes of this work and to announce new initiatives.

Since signing the America Recycles Pledge in November 2018, EPA and participating organizations met regularly to undertake actions to promote education and outreach, enhance materials management infrastructure, strengthen secondary materials markets, and improve measurement. The work of this ongoing collaboration, including future activities, is described in the *National Framework to Advance the U.S. Recycling System*, which was released at the Summit. Videos highlighting recycling programs of three tribal nations, were aired to Summit attendees and convey the importance and impact of recycling:

- [Muscogee \(Creek\) Nation Recycling Program](#)
- [The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Recycling Program](#)
- [The Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma Recycling Program](#)

EPA Hosts EJ Session at Tribal Lands Environmental Forum

Several EPA staff served on panels to advance environmental and public health protection for tribal communities during the virtual [2020 Tribal Lands Environmental Forum](#). EPA held a [session](#) on "Meaningful Involvement in Tribal Environmental Programs – Building EJ Capacity." EPA discussed the core principles of the Agency's [Tribal and Indigenous EJ Policy](#) and how EPA applied some of these principles to work collaboratively with the Northern Cheyenne Tribe on a Brownfields redevelopment project. The project included getting meaningful input from elders, children, tribal council, educational institutions, and the economic development association. This session helped tribes to consider the ways they can enhance or expand their meaningful engagement and public participation processes in their environmental decision-making. Over 900 individuals participated in the conference and all sessions were recorded and are available through the conference website.

COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

EPA and Partners Help Colonias Near Alamo, Texas, Find Funding for a Wastewater Treatment Plant

In 2015, EPA met with a group of civic organizations to discuss environmental challenges in the South Tower colonias in Hidalgo County, near Alamo. There were 15 colonias with more than 3,000 people situated around the city of Alamo's open wastewater lagoon. These communities commonly lack of the most basic living necessities, live in impoverished conditions and have limited access to resources. Colonias often depend on collaboration from civic and government entities for assistance. A youth group representing these colonias began raising awareness of the dilapidated and foul-smelling wastewater lagoon that was very close to residences. They voiced their concerns through radio, television, and social media looking for options to solve

the problem. These activities lead to meaningful public engagement and accomplished community-driven solutions. Because of the location of colonias and their governmental jurisdiction, it was especially important to facilitate collaboration among the different stakeholders. EPA facilitated a successful project in these colonias in coordination with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). Working in concert with the city of Alamo, TCEQ and TWDB, EJ staff listened to residents and discussed alternative solutions, which made project funding possible. After securing over 11 million dollars from the TWDB, the city of Alamo began construction of a new 2.5 million of gallons daily mechanical wastewater treatment plant in September 2020.

Community Outreach Tied to Oasis Mobile Home Park Water Issue (near Thermal, California)

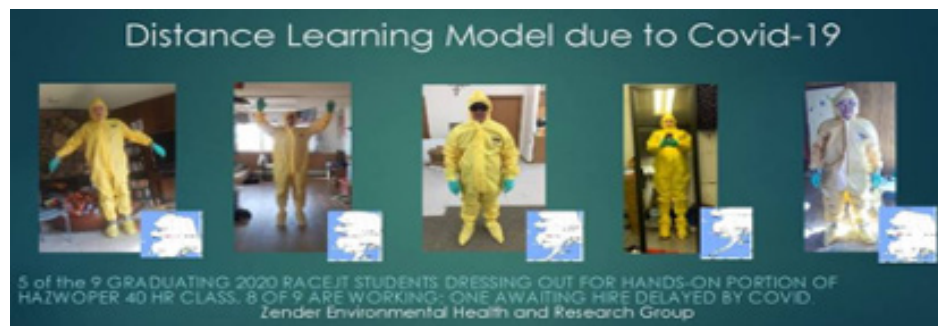
Oasis Mobile Home Park, located within the Torres-Martinez Tribe reservation, is home to about 1,900 residents. Oasis residents are primarily from the central region of Mexico and speak P'urhépecha, a distinct language, and face extreme poverty rates. In 2019, EPA found the Mobile Home Park's privately owned drinking water system to have unacceptable levels of arsenic, which is a health risk. EPA ordered Oasis to fix its drinking water system and provide bottled water to the residents while it upgraded its system. From the outset, Region 9 prioritized community outreach tailored to the residents' needs as a key component of the response. In FY 2020, Region 9:

- Assembled a cross-program team to ensure Oasis supplied clean water and to help residents understand where they could get clean water.
- Learned about the community and its needs through wide-ranging research and conversations with the tribe and local officials.
- Created a plain-language fact sheet in English and Spanish.
- Issued a press release in Spanish announcing the order, establishing a Spanish-speaking EPA contact for the public, and broadcasting a stream of TV and radio interviews conducted in Spanish.

EPA Region 9 also hosted two bilingual "Mobile Information Center" events in a location easily accessible by the community to provide residents an opportunity to speak with EPA staff, ask questions and get critical water information. A local resident was enlisted to provide P'urhépecha translation services, and participating EPA staff were fluent in Spanish. After learning that most residents were unable to attend the second day of the event, EPA Region 9 provided individual outreach to residents during their work breaks and at their homes. EPA also worked with nearby municipal organizations and congressional offices to coordinate and promote the mobile events and share information.

Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training – Zender Inc. Program Provides Opportunities for Rural Alaskan Residents

Zender Environmental Health and Research Group (Zender) is a five-time grant recipient of the EPA's Brownfield Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training program. During these five years, they have trained and placed over 115 participants in jobs with an average of over \$18 in hourly wages. Zender is a non-profit organization that provides environmental program services for underserved tribal and isolated-rural populations in Alaska. Zender's Rural Alaska Community Environmental Job Training Program



The photo shows five of the nine graduating students donning their HAZWOPER decon equipment for the 40 hours certifying course. All nine completed session one of RACEJT 2020 and when safe to travel, will fly in and complete the hands-on portion of the remaining courses to complete their UAF, Occupational Endorsement.

(RACEJT) was designed to train local residents for local job opportunities, while recognizing the needs of those who live a subsistence lifestyle. Their partnerships with employers have been successful with an 85% retention rate and 95% job placement rate.

RACEJT participants remained committed to the program, despite the challenges faced during FY 2020, including shortfalls in funding that resulted in lower worker wages. Without primary care access, all RACEJT-served communities are officially high risk, so that the normal residential style training for which participants applied switched to distance training overnight. Rural broadband did not allow for live video. Over a period of 12 weeks and one to four hours daily, their classes were conducted via phone - using printed materials and supplies that were regularly posted and delivered via small plane. Courses such as HAZWOPER were completed all while under quarantine conditions, taking care of family and subsistence activities. In FY 2020, nine students received several national certifications, which will help them obtain meaningful work. The 2020 graduates are now working as spill responders, landfill operators, collectors and laborers, utility clerks and wastewater plant staff.

Proctor Creek Story Map: The Intersection of Green Infrastructure and Health

EPA Region 4, Office of Research and Development, and the Proctor Creek community in Atlanta, Georgia, developed a Story Map that provides resources and informs future decisions around the expansion of green infrastructure in the watershed. EPA assisted the community in creating a plan that will protect Proctor Creek and its community members, as well as engage stewards for the watershed. Proctor Creek is an impaired waterway that experiences frequent flooding, stormwater runoff, pollution from illegal dumping, and has dozens of brownfields in the surrounding area. Residents and stakeholders are taking action to turn around decades of neglect and disinvestment to restore the watershed. The Story Map provides information on the following for the Proctor Creek watershed:

- Areas of proposed expansion of green infrastructure and its positive public health impacts.
- Community-identified concerns, e.g., flooding and water quality, urban heat islands, mosquitoes, health, brownfields, and illegal dumping of trash and tires.

Resources about demographics and health in Proctor Creek.

The community is also using the Story Map as a communication mechanism for the “trash catchment” system recently installed in Proctor Creek. This is a community-driven litter reduction project that has collected and removed more than 1,200 pounds of trash and debris from the Proctor Creek watershed and has educated 75 students on litter abatement. The trash catchment system improves water quality and stream habitat by removing significant volumes of trash from a creek where subsistence fishing continues. Data is collected on the amounts and types of trash. The trash is disposed of properly, including recycled or reused, as appropriate. This project engaged the public on the importance of recycling and properly disposing of trash and created local green jobs for the community. Click [here](#) to visit the Story Map.



Proctor Creek Story Map



Trash catchment system at Proctor Creek.



Community Engagement to Advance Environmental Justice in Region 5

EPA Region 5's EJ program engages with state and local government and community leaders in response to concerns about disproportionate environmental and public health impacts. Working with relevant internal and external partners, we invest in local capacity through EJ grants, tool provision (EJSCREEN, AHEAD), and convening or joining in collaborative problem-solving efforts as needed. Over the long term, these investments facilitate a whole-government approach to community priorities and needs. Examples of this community-focused work during FY 2020 include:

Cincinnati, Ohio: In Fall 2019, the EJ program met in person with community leaders to listen and talk with residents affected by decade-long recurring sewer backups and overland flooding. Since then, Region 5's EJ program and Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division, along with Ohio EPA, have helped to improve and strengthen the community's understanding of the current consent decrees, including the wet weather improvement program and Sewer Backup Programs. By increasing our communication with the Cincinnati community, the EJ program has built trust and openness in our ongoing relationship.

Peoria, Illinois: The EJ program met with community leaders to listen to concerns about cumulative air quality impacts on health. The EJ program subsequently met with Region 5's Air and Radiation Division and Children's Health programs to identify possible resources and approaches that might assist the community to better understand and address local issues. Information has been provided about resources cumulative impact strategies and availability of community air sensors. Additionally, webinars were held about energy efficiency and environmentally friendly renovation, operation, and maintenance practices in houses of worship. Region 5 will continue to provide assistance that will result in improved relationships among stakeholders and tangible environmental improvements.

Seattle, King County: "Lower Duwamish Waterway/Seafood Consumption Institutional Controls Implementation and Assurance Plan"

In FY 2020, EPA finalized the Lower Duwamish Waterway (LDW)/Seafood Consumption Institutional Controls Implementation and Assurance Plan in partnership with Public Health – Seattle & King County and Community Health Advocates. Community Health Advocates (CHA) and Public Health Seattle King County (PHSKC) worked directly with the Lower Duwamish Waterway fisher communities and their families to develop tools and training to educate fishers and those eating fish about the contaminated Duwamish River Superfund site. The project goals are to promote healthy actions around fishing for and eating only salmon on the LDW and avoid the contaminated resident fish and seafood. In FY 2020 this diverse partnership:



EPA booth at a community outreach event to help educate families about healthy fishing eating practices near the Duwamish River Superfund site.

- Developed training materials in collaboration with three fisher communities—Latino, Cambodian and Vietnamese.
- Updated CHA Training Curriculum ([curriculum version 2.0](#)) for capacity building.
- Led outreach events (in-person and virtual since March 2020).
- Completed community tools (e.g., Duwamish Fish Advisory pocket cards, youth activity coloring book, and "Healthy Fishing on the Duwamish – Let's Catch Salmon" fishing videos in collaboration with partners in four languages (English, Khmer, Spanish and Vietnamese).
- Planned strategies for a Moms/Caregiver's Workshop and a Duwamish Fishing Club.

All of the Public Health and CHA work moved online in March 2020 and the tool development, outreach and education has continued. While the fisher communities, culturally depend on sharing meals and stories in person to learn and stay connected, they have adapted to the on-line format very well.

OTHER PARTNERS

EPA Research Grantees Provide Practical Solution for North Carolina EJ Community

An EPA research grantee from the University of North Carolina (UNC) – Duke has helped deliver a practical environmental solution to a community in North Carolina. In 2018, EPA issued a Request for Applications through the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) program seeking research for “[Using a Total Environment Framework \(Built, Natural, Social Environments\) to Assess Life-long Health Effects of Chemical Exposures.](#)” The UNC-Duke collaboration, “[Building Water Infrastructure to Improve Childhood Outcomes: Interventions to Decrease Childhood Lead Exposure from Private Wells.](#)” tested the well water quality in its EJ community partner, Irongate Drive Community in North Carolina, which relied upon private wells rather than a municipal system for its water supply. The research revealed evidence of well water contamination and its potential adverse impacts on children’s health and academic performance in the community. The research team worked with the community leaders to successfully petition connection to the municipal water supply for the Irongate Drive Community. The project and corresponding success story has been published in the journal *New Solutions, A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*, “[Impacts of Exclusion From Municipal Water Service on Water Availability: A Case Study.](#)”

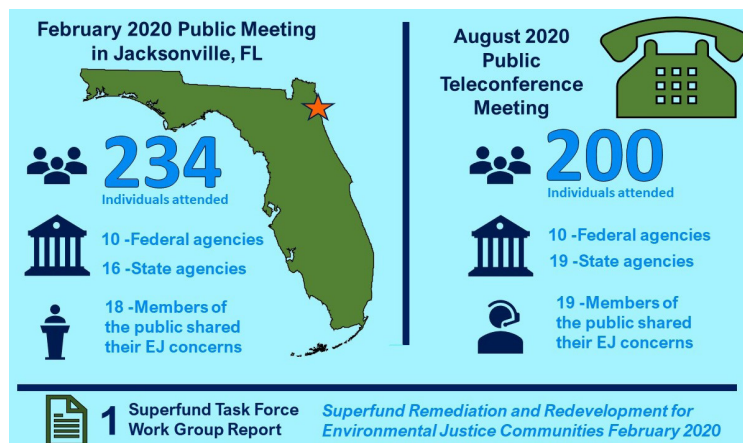
EPA Region 3 Collaborates with Developer in North Philadelphia

In FY 2020, EPA Region 3 collaborated with a developer in North Philadelphia to redevelop sites adjacent to the Temple University Health Sciences Campus in North Philadelphia. This community has been identified as an area of EJ concern based on data from EJSCREEN and its location in a designated opportunity zone. The developer’s vision includes developing a “Healthy Town” that will address the needs of this community, e.g., affordable housing, collaborations with academic institutions, a smart technology incubator, gateway improvements for the community, food justice issues, job creation and training. EPA Region 3 participated in the community dialogue sponsored by the developer, which included community residents and local community organizations, academic institutions, local businesses and medical institutions. Region 3 provided the developer with an EJSCREEN analysis, the benefits of developing in opportunity zones, and environmental and public health information specific to the census tracts to be developed. The developer used this information to bring additional investors on board to help implement the Healthy Town vision. The Region also convened a meeting with the developer and federal agencies with available resources targeted for projects in opportunity zones.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL

EPA partners with the [National Environmental Justice Advisory Council](#) (NEJAC), an external group of EJ stakeholders that provide independent advice and [recommendations](#) to the EPA Administrator on matters related to EJ. The NEJAC has [31 members](#) who come from a diverse background, including academia, community groups, industry and business, non-government organizations, state and local governments, tribal governments and indigenous groups. Together they evaluate a broad range of strategic, scientific, technological, regulatory, community engagement, and economic policy issues. The NEJAC also generally holds two to four public meetings each year.

At in-person [NEJAC public meetings](#), there are panel sessions for local community organizations to present their EJ efforts and challenges. There is also a [public comment session](#) that enables individuals to



Highlights of FY20 NEJAC public meetings.

share their concerns and experiences with environmental injustice in person and/or in writing. These valuable dialogues directly connect vulnerable communities with the NEJAC and EPA and help raise awareness of EJ issues across the country. In FY 2020, the NEJAC:

- Held a February 2020 public meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, where three EPA Regional Administrators attended, two of whom presented to the NEJAC. Representatives from 10 federal agencies and 16 state agencies attended. A total of 234 individuals attended in-person or via phone, and 18 members of their public shared their EJ concerns.
- Held an August 2020 public teleconference meeting where a total of 200 individuals attended via phone, and 37 members of the public shared their EJ concerns.
- Managed the Superfund Task Force Working Group activities based on a [Charge to the NEJAC on Superfund Remediation and Redevelopment for EJ Communities](#).
- Produced a report entitled [Phase One Report: Superfund Remediation and Redevelopment for Environmental Justice Communities February 2020](#).



Left photo: Community voices panel discussion, Ms. Linda Lee of Apopka, FL, sharing her experiences as an agricultural worker directly affected by pesticides. Right photo: EPA Disaster Recovery and Community Resilience in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands panel discussion, including Region 2 Regional Administrator, Pete Lopez; Juan Rosario, Alliance for Sustainable Resource Management; Dr. Cecilio Ortiz Garcia, University.

National Environmental Justice Advisory Council Superfund Working Group

In 2018, the NEJAC received a charge from the EPA Superfund Task Force to help integrate EJ into the cleanup and redevelopment of Superfund and other contaminated sites. The overall goal of the charge is to provide recommendations to the EPA Administrator that will identify barriers, solutions, and best practices for improving our ability to achieve clean-ups of Superfund sites more quickly and with better outcomes for local communities. The charge takes the unique burdens and vulnerabilities of EJ populations living in and around Superfund sites into central consideration while maintaining our focus on protecting human health and the environment. To address this charge, NEJAC established the Superfund Working Group. The Superfund Working Group has met regularly since it was created, including three in-person meetings. The Working Group established an extensive and systematic working process in the development of recommendations. This included reviews of past Superfund efforts, examining and developing case studies, and talking to communities impacted by Superfund cleanups. An interim report was issued by the Working Group in February 2020.

RCRA Corrective Action Vision, Mission and Goals

In FY 2020, the Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery (ORCR) initiated a series of outreach activities to gather input from a wide range of stakeholders into the development of a high-level vision, mission and goal(s) for the RCRA Corrective Action program over the next 5-10 years. The purpose of this stakeholder outreach was to promote transparency, inclusion, and meaningful stakeholder engagement in developing the overall direction for the future of the program. [Corrective action](#) is a requirement under the [Resource Conservation and Recovery Act \(RCRA\)](#) stipulating that facilities that treat, store or dispose of hazardous wastes investigate and clean up releases of hazardous waste or constituents into soil, ground water, surface water, and air. EPA states and territories are currently working on more than 3,779 priority cleanups across the country.

In developing a new [Vision, Mission, and Goals for the Corrective Action](#) program, OLEM and ORCR hosted individual discussions with stakeholder groups including members of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC), community organizers, local governments through the Revitalizing Communities Workgroup of EPA's Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC), facility owner/operators, tribal partners, and state partners, including the Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials (ASTSWMO). EPA incorporated the input gathered through the individual stakeholder discussions and then hosted a multi-stakeholder roundtable at which all stakeholders involved in the initial discussions were invited to share their reactions and suggestions to the revised vision, mission, and goals. EPA took this feedback into account in making final revisions and announced the final vision, mission, and goals for the program at the ASTSWMO Virtual Corrective Action Conference on September 1, 2020.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

EPA Work Included in United States Universal Periodic Review Report on Human Rights

In August 2020, the State Department submitted the United States Universal Period Review (UPR) report to the United Nations Human Rights Council in preparation for the US [UPR](#) Review in November 2020. Federal agencies contribute to the U.S. international human rights reports, such as the UPR, by sharing how their work advances human rights within the United States. For EPA, this includes [work on environmental justice](#). As recommended by EPA, the UPR report includes a reference to the Agency's work to address the environmental and public health concerns of minority, low-income, tribal and indigenous communities. Examples include EPA efforts to [reduce blood lead levels](#) in children, [clean up contaminated sites](#), [expand access to safe drinking water](#), and implement the [EPA Policy](#) on Environmental Justice for Working with Federally Recognized Tribes and Indigenous Peoples. The report also notes the work of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice. The [US report](#) was posted to the UN website in November 2020. Past US reports are currently available on the [UN UPR US website](#).





SECTION 3 – Greater Certainty, Compliance and Effectiveness

EPA's third strategic goal is to increase certainty, compliance and effectiveness in how the Agency does its work. Ensuring EJ not only means protecting human health and the environment for everyone, but also ensuring that all people are given the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Everyone in the United States - regardless of race, color, national origin or income - should have equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment.

EPA prioritizes risk communication, which helps promote meaningful engagement for vulnerable communities. To foster productive relationships based on mutual trust between EPA and communities, the Agency exchanges information and facilitates community participation in the decision-making process. This communication can include EJ trainings and tools that communities can use to better understand policies and processes, as well as access data on environmental and demographic indicators (e.g., EJSCREEN). This effort also involves improving communication of risk around toxic sites or during a crisis, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as noted in section 1. This section shows how EPA is working to support vulnerable communities during these unprecedented times.

COORDINATION BETWEEN EJ & CIVIL RIGHTS PROGRAMS

EPA's External Civil Rights Compliance Office (ECRCO) is responsible for enforcing several federal civil rights laws that together prohibit discrimination on the bases of race, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency LEP), disability, sex, and age, in programs or activities that apply for or receive financial assistance from the Agency. ECRCO does this primarily through complaint investigations, but also through proactive reviews and technical assistance and policy formulation. EPA has a multi-pronged effort on coordination between ECRCO and EJ that includes:

1. Investigation of complaints filed with EPA pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other

federal nondiscrimination laws enforced by EPA.

2. Training and technical assistance to state agencies and local agencies and tribes, across EPA on proactively addressing their civil rights obligations.
3. Coordinated community engagement with OEJ at the national and regional level to assist in relationship building with EPA recipients and to provide timely and accurate information about civil rights and the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regarding the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

In FY 2020, ECRCO worked to ensure that LEP communities had meaningful access to vital information related to the COVID-19 pandemic in [11 different languages](#). Similarly, ECRCO has worked with EPA programs and offices to ensure that policies and initiatives, such as those related to virtual public hearings and meetings, the EPA order on disaster mitigation and recovery activities and others, incorporate important civil rights obligations, like the obligation to provide meaningful access for persons with limited English proficiency and persons with disabilities. In FY 2020, ECRCO also coordinated with OEJ on EJ and civil rights trainings.

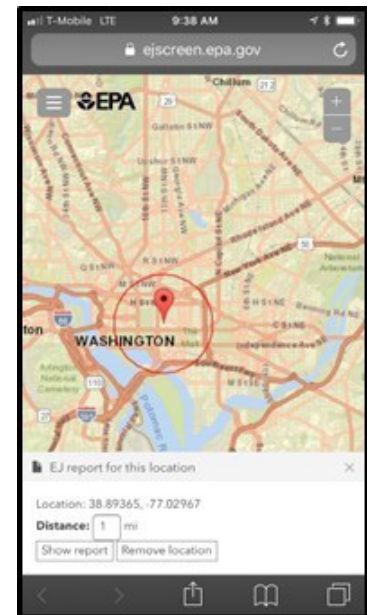
EJSCREEN

[EJSCREEN](#) is EPA's EJ tool that allows viewers to see high resolution demographic and environmental information for a location in the United States. This online tool is [mobile-friendly](#) and uses nationally consistent data to compare locations across the United States into easy-to-use maps and reports. It also improves governments' ability to use data to guide programs and policies, including EPA's approach to addressing EJ. The Agency has used EJSCREEN since 2012 to look for areas that may be candidates for additional EJ consideration, analysis or outreach. This includes the review of civil enforcement cases, community involvement around Superfund sites, and other mission critical work.

Following its public release in 2015, EJSCREEN quickly became a resource for all levels of government, private sector, and communities to identify potential areas with EJ concerns and other environmental issues. It consistently ranks as one of EPA's most used tools.

In FY 2020, the EJ Program trained 1,676 individuals, representing a wide range of government and nongovernment organizations. This work included:

- Empowering federal partners to consider EJ in their work through EJSCREEN trainings. Agencies included the Department of Justice, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- Supporting local and state governments' efforts to build their own state-based EJ tools through EJSCREEN trainings, resources, and technical assistance. As a result, many states, including Michigan, North Carolina, and New Jersey have built or are building state specific EJ tools.
- Piloting a training to help teachers develop EJ lesson plans using EJSCREEN. EPA plans to expand resources for educators.
- Helping communities with EJ concerns provide better environmental and demographic data in their grant applications by sharing EJSCREEN information during grant application calls.



Redlining in the Mid-Atlantic Region: Mapping the Environmental Legacy

Redlining refers to discriminatory geographic zoning practices that took place in the United States during the 20th century. Redlining discouraged mortgage investments in minority communities based on race and ethnicity and fostered the systemic racism that persists today. The program recorded its demographic biases

across the country in publicly available maps that identified minority communities by outlining them in red – or, in other words, by redlining them.

Many redlined areas continue to endure financial, social, and environmental inequities linked to redline-related discrimination from public and private sectors. Communities in many of these areas still face considerable impacts from hazardous materials and industry given these disadvantages. To advance federal strategies for addressing environmental impacts of redlining in Region 3, the Region 3 EJ Program provided redlining trainings in Region-wide presentations on fundamentals and applications of EJ in FY 2020. Region 3 also developed a mapping system that clarifies the environmental legacy of redlining by plotting 1930s maps of redlined areas beneath current EJSCREEN EJ map data. These mapping results are intended to identify links from redlining to current EJ challenges. Region 3 will continue to direct trainings on redlining and this mapping project in 2021.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

Supporting EJ Community Recovery Efforts Following Hurricane Michael

Region 4 partnered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other state, federal and university partners to support recovery efforts in the Florida Panhandle following Hurricane Michael. Through EPA's support of FEMA's [Recovery and Resiliency Partnership Project \(R2P2\)](#), several North Florida communities, including Quincy, Springfield, Chattahoochee, Marianna, Parker and Mexico Beach, received technical assistance to develop strategies and design concepts that bolster resiliency to stormwater impacts, improve quality of life and support sustainable redevelopment. These efforts will help advance each city's vision for long-term economic recovery by developing design concepts and strategies that integrate recreation, stormwater management, community connectivity, and downtown development.

In collaboration with FEMA, EPA's College/Underserved Communities Partnership Program (CUPP) engaged several university partners in support of coastal recovery efforts. Florida A&M University and Florida State University completed an engineering design for the Tyndall Corridor water and wastewater design for new systems installed. The Drexel Engineering School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, completed an engineering design for the Dupont Bridge at the entrance to the Tyndall Corridor. In FY 2020, EPA Region 4 and OEJ partnered with Region 4 FEMA to conduct a virtual EJ training for over 75 attendees of the regional and national Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation office. The training focused on EPA operations, federal agency responsibilities under Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice, and potential environmental and social impacts to communities.

EPA also trained partners on how to use EJSCREEN. This training builds on R4's ongoing partnership with FEMA supporting their overall Disaster Recovery efforts by increasing FEMA's early identification of disadvantaged communities that may need additional support. These efforts also build upon EPA's priority of having a collaborative approach to working with communities after a disaster by utilizing tools like EJSCREEN during preparedness operations alongside integrating sustainability into long-term recovery efforts. Collaborating with state and federal agencies to address the critical needs of communities is a priority for both agencies.

Enhancing Environmental Justice in Emergency Response Efforts

EPA continues to make progress to ensure its emergency response functions are inclusive in addressing community concerns about environment and public health. EPA's disaster and emergency response role focuses on responding to threats and impacts from the release of hazardous materials and addressing the impacts on community water and wastewater systems. In recent years, EPA has recognized the need for more proactive consideration of the concerns of EJ communities during response operations. During FY 2020, OEJ and the Office of Emergency Management developed training to enhance EJ efforts in emergency responses. More than 100 Region 6 Incident Command team staff and other appropriate response and recovery personnel were trained on specific ways to enhance EJ during response activities. Region 6 added its EJ office to its Regional Incident Command Team, which enhanced opportunities to facilitate stakeholder

engagement and better understand how EJ fits into recovery efforts. In the aftermath of Hurricane Laura, EJ staff used alternative communication channels to reach EJ stakeholders, as well as helped coordinate daily distribution of information about recovery efforts to those stakeholders. EJ staff also solicited and reported concerns about property damage, unusual odors, and personal wellness up to the incident command team for action. In one response, EPA deployed air monitoring staff and equipment to the Southeast Texas area to assess community concerns about heavy chemical odors.

EJ HOTLINE AND EJ LISTSERV

EPA's National Environmental Justice Hotline offers communities an accessible way to inform the Agency of environmental and public health concerns. It serves as a mechanism to promote the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of communities who experience or have the potential to experience adverse environmental and public health impacts in their residence and communities. The Hotline is responsive to community members who call or email to share their concerns. In FY 2020, EPA achieved a 99.5% ticket closure rate for the 630 inquiries received.

The Hotline responds to numerous concerns on various issues including radon, lead paint in housing, destruction of wetlands, storm drainage issues, pollution, sewage leakage concerns, mold, gas emission, and other issues. If a topic is not related to environmental justice, the goal is to point the individual to a resource that could potentially help them. Because of the assistance EPA provides through the EJ Hotline, callers have expressed their appreciation for the excellent customer service. A recent distressed EJ Hotline caller expressed her gratitude for the excellent customer service. She had seeking assistance on a mold issue in her house but was unable to get the information she needed. Through the EJ Hotline, she was kindly and patiently provided the information she needed.



Veda Reed is the face and voice of EJ Hotline, a service that helps individuals obtain information for their environmental and public health concerns.

In FY 2020, EPA sent over 30 listserv announcements covering a range of EJ-related resources, funding and training opportunities to over 6,000 EJ listserv members. To sign up, go to https://lists.epa.gov/read/all_forums/subscribe?name=epa-ej



Figure 4 EJ Listserv highlights and how to sign up for the EJ Listserv.information for their environmental and public health concerns.

EDUCATION, TRAININGS AND TOOLS

Community Involvement Coordinators and Community Involvement Training Program

The Superfund program has developed a series of community involvement tools and techniques as well as a Community Involvement Handbook and other resources to train EPA community involvement staff on best practices for risk communication. The Superfund program and Region 5 hosted the national 2020 Superfund Community Involvement Training Program delivering training in the areas of risk communication, EJ and various innovative tools and programs while at the same time providing opportunity for sharing and improving how we effectively engage the communities we serve. EPA also has a Community Involvement University, a training platform to support Superfund site cleanups by providing EPA community involvement coordinators, Superfund site teams and other EPA staff relevant courses to learn, build and improve the necessary skills, techniques, and practices to engage the community in the Superfund process.

Moreover, the Superfund program holds monthly calls with Community Involvement Coordinators (CICs)

to share information and best practices for community involvement work. These calls have served double duty since March 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic, as community involvement staff continue their work to engage Superfund communities and find innovative ways to provide opportunities for communities to participate in the Superfund process. In FY 2020, EPA CICs:

- Held or participated in 570 public meetings and conducted more than 1,200 interviews with community members living near Superfund sites.
- Distributed more than 750 factsheets, mailings, postcards, advertisements, or newsletters that reached more than 259,000 people living near Superfund sites.

RCRA Public Participation Toolkit

Public participation is a key component to the success of EPA's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) program. Involvement and engagement of impacted communities leads to safer and healthier outcomes and improves RCRA program cleanups and permit activities. In FY 2020, the Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery launched an online Public Participation Toolkit to empower communities to become more actively involved in the permit and cleanup decision-making processes for hazardous waste facilities from generation to transportation, treatment, storage and disposal.

The [RCRA Public Participation Toolkit](#) was developed with advice and input from the Regions and the Office of General Counsel and should be used in conjunction with the [2016 edition of the RCRA Public Participation Manual](#) to implement public involvement activities at RCRA sites. The toolkit presents a broad range of activities that RCRA site teams, community involvement staff, permitting agencies, public interest groups, community leaders, and facility owners/operators can use to design and promote public participation. Each tool describes an activity or resource to involve and inform the community and explains how it can be used. Under each tool, the toolkit provides a brief overview and description of why the activity is important (including whether it is voluntary or required by law or regulation). The toolkit then moves into implementation and discussion about how and when that activity or resource can be used in the RCRA process.

Looking Forward

EPA remains committed to protecting the health and environment of everyone in the United States. In this past year, a pandemic has underscored the disparities that low-income, minority, tribal and indigenous communities experience. The FY 2020 Environmental Justice Progress Report highlights how EPA is helping vulnerable and overburdened communities address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as address disproportionate environmental impacts, health disparities and economic distress. EPA will build on this progress to continue helping vulnerable communities have cleaner and healthier land, air and water.



The Agency will continue expand its effective partnerships with federal, states, tribes, local governments, indigenous peoples, community-based organizations and academia to advance EJ. EPA will continue to provide tools, trainings and meaningful engagement opportunities for communities to help address EJ concerns. By working together with communities, partners and EJ stakeholders, communities across the United States will continue to become healthier, cleaner and more prosperous places to live, work, learn and play.



