

Understanding Environmental Justice Issues

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Overview

- What is Environmental Justice?
- Biden Administration Priorities
- Some Hard Questions
- Use of EJScreen Software
- Other Resources
- Take-Aways

What is Environmental Justice (EJ)?

- Fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. [USEPA, NCDEQ]
- EJ aims to address and redress the disproportionate effects of environmental policies and practices on the politically underrepresented, vulnerable, and disempowered, including low-income, indigenous, minority and other vulnerable communities. [ABA SEER Draft Report on EJ]

What is EJ?

- Definition has two parts: (1) fair treatment, and (2) meaningful involvement.
- First articulated by Clinton Administration in 1994.
- Many examples in the decades before:
 - Land conquest and treaty violations.
 - Civil rights movement and Warren County, NC.
 - 1987 UCC report concluding that racial composition of a neighborhood is single most important factor in determining where a toxic waste facility is sited.

Biden Administration Priorities

- Executive Order 14008 on **Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad** includes extensive provisions for EJ generally:
 - “To secure an equitable economic future, the United States must ensure that environmental and economic justice are key considerations in how we govern.”
 - Requires investing in clean energy that creates well-paying union jobs turning disadvantaged communities into healthy, thriving communities.
 - Establishes White House EJ Advisory Council to work with EPA’s National EJ Advisory Council.
 - USEPA to strengthen enforcement of environmental violations with disproportionate impact on underserved communities.

Biden Administration Priorities

- Also in January 27 EO 14008 :
 - Justice 40 initiative, seeking to assure that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities.
 - Office of EJ created in Justice Department.
 - Office of Climate Change and Health Equity created in Department of Health and Human Services. DHHS also to create a Working Group to Decrease Risk of Climate Change to Children, the Elderly, People with Disabilities, and the Vulnerable.
 - By February 2022, publish website with annual EJ Scorecard for relevant federal agencies.

Some Hard Questions

- Friction between local land use decisions and federal priorities—what if indigenous people in an area prefer to develop fossil fuel resources contrary to federal government policy?
- Friction between economic and environmental considerations—what happens if underserved community prefers jobs at a coal-fired power plant to solar panels?
- What happens when misinformation creates fear in a community? Political leaders often seem to feed the fear.

Use of EPA's EJScreen



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EJSCREEN: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool

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EJSCREEN Home

What is EJSCREEN?

How was EJSCREEN Developed?

How Does EPA Use EJSCREEN?

Purposes and Uses for EJSCREEN

Learn to Use EJSCREEN

Understanding EJSCREEN Results

Learn to Use EJSCREEN

EJSCREEN was designed as a web-based tool to provide easy access to reports and maps without the need to install software. To help beginners get started using EJSCREEN, a basic step-by-step walk-through is provided here.

In addition to this page, there are other training materials available on this site. The User Guide is available for download at: [User Guide for EJSCREEN \(PDF\)](#).

(49 pp, 2.3 MB, [About PDF](#))



EPA's EJScreen

The screenshot shows the EPA EJSCREEN web application interface. At the top, the browser address bar displays `ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/`. The application header includes the EPA logo, the text "EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (Version 2019)", and navigation links for "EJSCREEN Home | Mobile | Glo". A toolbar contains icons for "Select Location", "Add Maps", "Clear Selected Locations", "Print", "Measure", "Bookmarks", and "Basemap". The main map area shows a satellite-style view of the Pohick area in Fairfax County, VA, with a red circular buffer centered on a site. A "Chart or Report" dialog box is open over the site, containing the following fields and options:

- Name:
- Buffer:
- Explore Reports...
- Get Printable Standard Report...
- Get 2013-2017 ACS report...
- Get 2010 Census report...
- Get CDC report... (EXEL EPA)
-

The map includes various geographical features such as roads (e.g., Lorton Rd, Richmond Hwy, Telegraph Rd), parks (e.g., Middle Run Stream Valley Park, South Run Stream Valley Park), and landmarks (e.g., Davison Airfield, Fort Belvoir). A scale bar at the bottom right indicates 0.6 km and 0.4 mi. The bottom left corner features the "EnviroMapper" logo and a list of data sources: "Fairfax County VA VITA Feri HERF Garmin SafeGraph INCREMENT P MFT/NASA USGS EPA NPS US Census Bureau USDA".

EPA's EJScreen



EJSCREEN Report (Version 2019)
 2 miles Ring Centered at 38.725431,-77.191473
 VIRGINIA, EPA Region 3
 Approximate Population: 29,651
 Input Area (sq. miles): 12.56

(The study area contains 1 blockgroup(s) with zero population.)

Selected Variables	Percentile in State	Percentile in EPA Region	Percentile in USA
EJ Indexes			
EJ Index for Particulate Matter (PM 2.5)	66	69	59
EJ Index for Ozone	66	69	59
EJ Index for NATA* Diesel PM	70	72	63
EJ Index for NATA* Air Toxics Cancer Risk	66	70	59
EJ Index for NATA* Respiratory Hazard Index	66	70	59
EJ Index for Traffic Proximity and Volume	88	86	82
EJ Index for Lead Paint Indicator	73	73	66
EJ Index for Superfund Proximity	68	70	62
EJ Index for RMP Proximity	71	72	62
EJ Index for Hazardous Waste Proximity	76	75	67
EJ Index for Wastewater Discharge Indicator	98	96	94

EJ Index for the Selected Area Compared to All People's Blockgroups in the State/Region/US

EPA's EJScreen

Sites reporting to EPA	
Superfund NPL	0
Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facilities (TSDF)	3

Selected Variables	Value	State		EPA Region		USA	
		Avg.	%tile	Avg.	%tile	Avg.	%tile
Environmental Indicators							
Particulate Matter (PM 2.5 in $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	8.19	7.79	75	8.64	35	8.3	44
Ozone (ppb)	45.4	42.5	82	44.9	46	43	67
NATA* Diesel PM ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	0.788	0.425	90	0.477	80-90th	0.479	80-90th
NATA* Air Toxics Cancer Risk (risk per MM)	34	31	75	31	60-70th	32	50-60th
NATA* Respiratory Hazard Index	0.48	0.41	86	0.4	80-90th	0.44	60-70th
Traffic Proximity and Volume (daily traffic count/distance to road)	1200	570	87	640	85	750	84
Lead Paint Indicator (% pre-1960s housing)	0.04	0.21	30	0.36	14	0.28	24
Superfund Proximity (site count/km distance)	0.067	0.11	53	0.15	42	0.13	52
RMP Proximity (facility count/km distance)	1.1	0.38	90	0.62	82	0.74	78
Hazardous Waste Proximity (facility count/km distance)	0.96	0.66	78	1.3	62	4	63
Wastewater Discharge Indicator (toxicity-weighted concentration/m distance)	0.21	0.8	97	30	90	14	91
Demographic Indicators							
Demographic Index	37%	32%	66	30%	70	36%	59
Minority Population	59%	37%	78	32%	79	39%	73
Low Income Population	14%	26%	32	28%	28	33%	21
Linguistically Isolated Population	4%	3%	80	3%	81	4%	69
Population with Less Than High School Education	5%	11%	30	11%	28	13%	26
Population under Age 5	9%	6%	79	6%	81	6%	78
Population over Age 64	9%	14%	29	16%	21	15%	25

*The National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) is EPA's ongoing, comprehensive evaluation of air toxics in the United States. EPA developed the NATA to prioritize air toxics, emission sources, and locations of interest for further study. It is important to remember that NATA provides broad estimates of health risks over geographic areas of the country, not definitive risks to specific individuals or locations. More information on the NATA analysis can be found at: <https://www.epa.gov/national-air-toxics-assessment>.

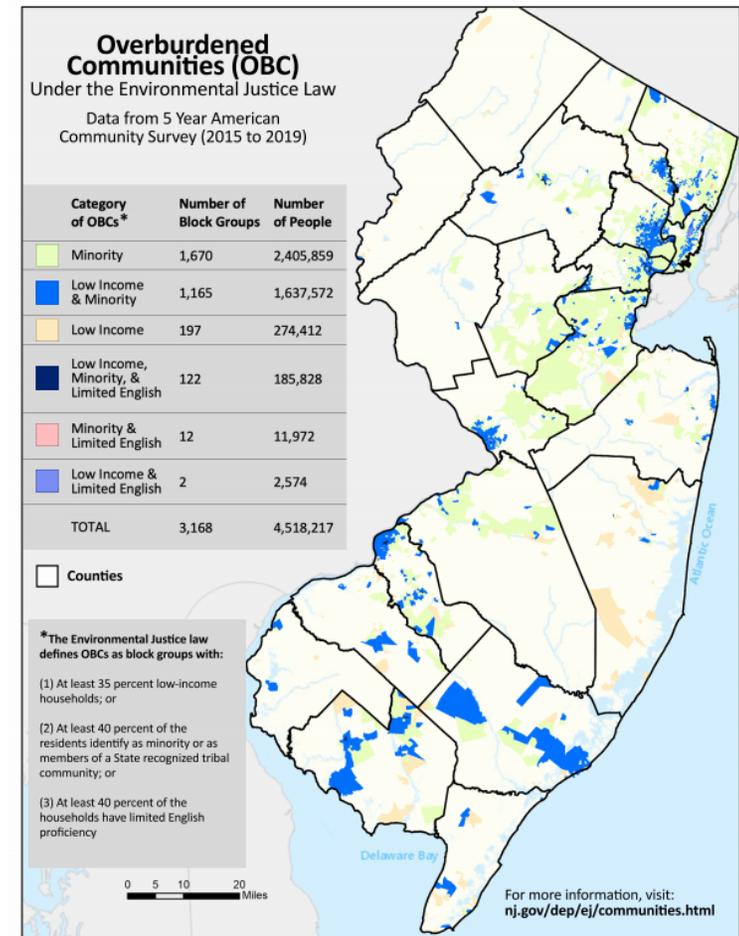
For additional information, see: www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice

Other Resources

Environmental Justice Law, N.J.S.A. 13:1D-157

An Overburdened Community (OBC):

- at least 35 percent of the households qualify as low-income households (at or below twice the poverty threshold as determined by the United States Census Bureau);
- at least 40 percent of the residents identify as minority or as members of a State recognized tribal community; or
- at least 40 percent of the households have limited English proficiency (without an adult that speaks English “very well” according to the United States Census Bureau)



Other Resources

- [California EJ Alliance: SB 1000 Implementation Toolkit](#)
 - EJ Planning
 - Identifying disadvantaged communities
 - Community engagement strategies
 - Case studies and funding sources
 - EJ Objectives and Policies
- Community outreach is a specialized skill—find experienced consultants in the community



Take-Aways

- Projects face enhanced EJ concerns from the federal government and many state governments.
 - Need to identify **and have a plan to address** potential hot button topics for a given project at a specific site.
 - Must incorporate EJ considerations in siting and similar studies.
 - Will need more professionals with EJ experience.
- Services of consultants who specialize in community outreach will be needed in many cases.