



OSWER Environmental Justice Action Agenda

Factsheet

This "OSWER Environmental Justice Action Agenda" (Action Agenda) is the culmination of a major effort, which began more than eighteen months ago, to address the important issue of environmental justice and establish OSWER's current strategy on environmental justice. This represents OSWER's commitment to adhere to the principles of President Clinton's Executive Order 12898 and EPA's "Environmental Justice Strategy: Executive Order 12898" released in May 1995.

Developed in Partnership with the Public

- ☞ The Action Agenda documents a success story of working with the public in developing a strategy and implementation plans. Assistant Administrator Elliott P. Laws believes that the working relationship that OSWER established with the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) Subcommittee on Waste and Facility Siting is a model for other Federal agencies and advisory committees.
- ☞ The Action Agenda reflects the incorporation of NEJAC comments on two April 1994 published documents, the "OSWER Environmental Justice Task Force Draft Final Report" (OSWER 9200.3-16 Draft) and its separate executive summary document (OSWER 9200.3-16-1 Draft), along with the experience, over the last year, in implementing environmental justice action items.

A Living Process

- ☞ The Action Agenda establishes a "living process" through which action items are continuously enhanced and solutions are developed for evolving environmental justice issues. Prior reports, current implementation plans and future reports all play a part in the process to continuously address environmental justice concerns.

Action Items

- ☞ The "OSWER Environmental Justice Action Agenda" report describes the key action items organized by OSWER-wide and program-specific issues and action items. The process of implementing these action items and the reporting of progress is the subject of the final chapter.
- ☞ OSWER's action items coalesce around five of the six environmental justice mission areas contained in Executive Order 12898 and EPA's environmental justice strategy:

1) Health and Environmental Research.

- ☞ OSWER supports the Agency-wide efforts to develop scientifically valid standards to measure cumulative risk to address concerns regarding populations exposed to multiple

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☞ sources or contaminants. In addition, Region 3 has initiated risk studies in Chester, PA and South/Southwest Philadelphia to develop scientifically valid measurements.

☞ EPA is committed to work with other federal agencies to address these health issues, such as with the Public Health Service (PHS) on Medical Assistance Plan (MAP) pilots.

2) Data Collection, Analysis, and Stakeholder Access to Information

☞ The Agency is currently using and evaluating several tools, such as a mainframe computer geographic information systems (GIS) and a personal computer-based LandView II™, to put information on demographics, pollution sources and geography into the hands of local communities.

3) Partnerships, Outreach and Communication with Stakeholders

☞ OSWER is emphasizing partnerships with all affected stakeholders to achieve environmental justice. For example, pilot activities at Superfund sites highlight the need for extensive involvement by other agencies in order to address public health concerns associated with environmental contamination. Expanding public participation in Superfund Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) is one of several other methods designed to inform and involve local communities.

☞ Major economic redevelopment activities, such as the "brownfields" initiative and worker training, will require partnerships. In outreach and communication with all stakeholders, OSWER has been very active and has many initiatives planned for the future.

4) Native American, Indigenous and Tribal Programs

☞ OSWER is increasing financial and technical assistance to Tribal governments and Native Alaskan villages. For example, OSWER will publish regulations that will enable tribes to obtain solid waste permit program approval from EPA, similar to State permit programs.

☞ During the summer of 1995, OSWER is conducting a special solicitation of additional comments on the Action Agenda from Tribes and Native Alaskan villages.

5) Integrating of Environmental Justice into all Agency's Activities

☞ A major catalyst for future action was created when OSWER issued a directive, in July 1994, to require that environmental justice be addressed in all OSWER policies and regulations.

☞ OSWER has made changes to its internal structure and operations to make environmental justice a normal part of the way we administer OSWER programs. OSWER will work with the Regions to ensure that all employees working on waste programs are informed on environmental justice.

The sixth environmental justice mission area of enforcement and compliance review is considered outside OSWER's authority, however, OSWER works closely with EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) when these issues arise.

For More Information

Copies of the Action Agenda will be available, when printed, through the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) at (703) 487-4650. Order Document number: EPA540/R-95/023. If you have questions, please contact Jim Maas at (202) 260-8927.