

# **Environmental Justice Fact Sheet**

## ***EPA's Commitment to Environmental Justice***



On November 4, 2005, Administrator Stephen L. Johnson issued a memorandum reaffirming EPA's commitment to environmental justice for all people, regardless of race, color, national origin or income. This means not only protecting human health and the environment for everyone, but also ensuring that all people are treated fairly and are given the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

In recognizing that minority and/or low-income communities frequently may be exposed disproportionately to environmental harms and risks, EPA works to protect these and other burdened communities from adverse human health and environmental effects of its programs, consistent with existing environmental and civil rights laws, and their implementing regulations, as well as Executive Order 12898 ("Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," Feb. 11, 1994).

The memorandum also identifies 8 national environmental justice priorities and directs the integration of environmental justice into EPA's planning and budgeting processes, including the Agency's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2006-2011. The 8 national priorities are:

### **Air**

Reduce Asthma Attacks  
Reduce Exposure to Air Toxics

### **Water**

Fish and Shellfish Safe to Eat  
Water Safe to Drink

### **Enforcement and Compliance**

Ensure Compliance

### **Land Preservation and Restoration**

Revitalization of Brownfields and  
Contaminated Sites

### **Toxics**

Reduced Incidence of Elevated Blood  
Lead Levels

### **Cross-Cutting**

Collaborative Problem-Solving

The November 4, 2005 memorandum reaffirms the Agency's commitment to environmental justice that was previously affirmed by then-Administrator Christine Todd Whitman on August 9, 2001. Former Administrator Whitman directed EPA staff to integrate environmental justice into programs, policies and activities. Consequently, since 2003, each Headquarter and Regional Office developed annual *Action Plans to Integrate Environmental Justice* to put the directive into action, with measurable results.

EPA will continue to fully implement its programs, policies, and activities to ensure that they do not adversely affect populations with critical environmental and public health issues, including minority and low-income communities.

Listed below are general environmental justice integration activities in EPA. In addition, each Region conducts several geographic-based activities. For more information on EPA's Environmental Justice Program, visit <[www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice](http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice)> or call (800) 962-6215.

Regional Listening Sessions - EPA uses the Regional listening sessions to engage the participants in active discourse, on topics ranging from general to specific areas of common interest/concern, and to work effectively towards mutually beneficial solutions. The Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) developed basic guidelines for conducting these dialogues as interactive, solution-oriented dialogues conducted with the community, and in partnership with federal, state, Tribal, local and municipal government representatives. These dialogues are intended to demonstrate EPA's responsiveness in addressing environmental, health, and quality of life concerns. Several regions conducted at least one listening session each year and details of these sessions are available upon request. Additional outreach activities across EPA are featured in the upcoming Biennial Report.

Interagency Work Group (IWG) Revitalization Projects - In the year 2000 and again in 2003, the IWG embarked on supporting national revitalization demonstration projects. Over these past five years, these 30 projects have met with significant achievements. Through these projects, over 150 organizations and 11 federal agencies have established working relationships and secured public and private funding to address issues ranging from children's health, renewable energy, safe drinking water systems, greenspace protection, to economic revitalization. As a result of these projects, the EPA released a report in February 2002 entitled, *Environmental Justice Collaborative Model: A Framework to Ensure Local Problem-Solving*, which is based on a multi-stakeholder collaborative model to address environmental justice.

Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program - In 2006, OEJ will release a Request for Applications for the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreement Program. OEJ will provide \$100,000 assistance awards to 10 non-profit, local community-based organizations who wish to engage in projects utilizing a collaborative problem-solving framework to find viable solutions for their community's environmental and/or public health issues. In 2004, OEJ awarded a total of \$3 million in cooperative agreements for 30 community-based projects.

Environmental Justice Small Grants Program - Since 1994, the Environmental Justice Small Grants program has provided financial assistance to community-based organizations working on local solutions to local environmental problems. From a pilot program with a \$500,00 budget and a \$10,000 limit per award, the program has awarded approximately \$21.7 million to 1,076 grant recipients and has a broad impact among communities with environmental justice issues. Small grants projects continue to address an array of environmental and human health issues such as childhood asthma, farmworker pesticide protection, fish consumption, indoor air quality, drinking water contamination, and lead poisoning prevention. In 2006, OEJ will release a Request for Applications for the Environmental Justice Small Grants Program.

Environmental Justice Geographic Assessment Tool - The Environmental Justice Geographic Assessment Tool was created to provide a means by which a selected geographic area can be assessed using the indicator-based approach outlined in the Environmental Justice Toolkit for Assessing Potential Allegations of Environmental Injustice. This tool provides the ability to screen geographic areas for disproportionate and adverse environmental risk and to understand the social, economic, health and environmental characteristics of a selected area. This tool will provide a way to easily access a robust set of environmental justice indicators that will allow the user to gain a comprehensive snapshot of a community and to assist EPA in future decision-making ability. This GIS tool is available at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/assessment.html>.

Environmental Justice Fundamentals Training - The *Fundamentals of Environmental Justice* Workshop explores the origins of the Environmental Justice Movement, perceptions and definitions of environmental justice, laws pertaining to environmental justice, and provides an overview of the Environmental Justice Geographic Assessment Tool, and other analytical tools to help understand, integrate and address environmental justice issues. The goals of the workshop are to identify and address environmental justice issues. Participants learn to effectively engage in productive dialogue around the issues of environmental justice and promote constructive and collaborative problem-solving techniques. Equally important is the goal to integrate aspects of environmental justice into the participants work on a daily basis. These training sessions are a means to consistently integrate environmental justice into environmental programs.

Alternative Dispute Resolution Training for Communities - On September 23-25, 2004, OEJ kicked off a national multi-year training effort entitled *Using Environmental Laws and Alternative Dispute Resolution to Achieve Environmental Justice*, which brought together a diverse group of 30 to 35 individuals from environmental justice community-based organizations and grassroots groups to increase their understanding of the variety of tools available through environmental laws and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) that can be used to address environmental justice concerns. The course was developed through a cooperative agreement with the Environmental Law Institute, in partnership with the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, the Southeast Community Research Center; and Michael Lewis, who is a mediator, teacher, trainer and consultant in dispute systems design. A toolkit of educational materials is also provided in English and Spanish. A second training was held in Newark, New Jersey in September 2005. Additional training workshops are scheduled for March 2006 in Denver, Colorado and September 2006 in Chicago, Illinois. Future trainings will be held in all regions. Prior to this training, OEJ held a training session on *Using Alternative Dispute Resolution to Achieve Environmental Justice* in El Monte, California in September 2002 and Memphis, Tennessee in September 2003. The training was developed by the Consensus Building Institute, and Justice for Sustainability Associates.

Environmental Careers Organization Internships - The Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) has been working with EPA to foster environmental opportunities ever since OEJ opened its doors back in 1992. Students receive practical experience working in fields such as science, engineering, law, computer science, political analysis, and more. To date, over \$36 million has been invested in this program called *Furthering Environmental Careers*, which has given more than 2,200 plus students opportunities for on-the-job training and community involvement. By nurturing these students, OEJ also hopes to ingrain the concept of environmental justice in the next generation of environmental professionals.

The success of the EPA/ECO partnership has spawned another program with a direct benefit to communities. Since OEJ launched its Community Intern Program in 2000, a total of 169 students have gained working experience at the grassroots level providing much needed support to community-based organizations whose resources are always quite inadequate. This program has allowed students to gain experience and become more interested in environmental careers. To learn more about the program, visit <<http://www.eco.org>>.

National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) - On August 16, 2005, EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson approved the renewal of the charter for the NEJAC, which provides the EPA Administrator with advice and recommendations with respect to integrating environmental justice into EPA's programs, policies, and day-to-day activities. As a federal advisory committee consisting of representatives of academia, community-based organizations, business and industry, state and local government, non-governmental and environmental organizations, and tribal governments and indigenous groups, the NEJAC has developed consensus proposals to the Agency for creative and collaborative strategies to better address the human health and environmental protection needs of disadvantaged and underserved communities and to ensure that the goal of environmental justice is being integrated in Agency policies, programs, and priorities. In 2006, EPA convened a NEJAC workgroup to provide advice and recommendations about the environmental justice issues related to the cleanup and rebuilding of areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Environmental Law Institute Studies - The Environmental Law Institute (ELI) published *Opportunities for Advancing Environmental Justice: An Analysis of US EPA Statutory Authorities* as an in-depth look at the major environmental laws governing air and water quality, waste management, pesticide and chemical regulation, and public right-to-know. The report also identifies specific statutory authorities for promoting environmental justice in the full range of EPA program functions: standard setting and permitting, enforcement, delegation of program authority to States, information gathering, and financial assistance. Subsequently, ELI published *A Citizen's Guide to Using Environmental Laws to Secure Environmental Justice* as a "plain English" resource to familiarize communities with federal statutes and find opportunities for meaningful public involvement in environmental decisionmaking. These studies were made possible through a cooperative agreement with OEJ. In addition, the Environmental Law Institute, Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, and the United Church of Christ developed a video entitled, *Citizens and Environmental Laws*. This video can be used as a training tool to show how environmental laws can be used to address pollution of the water, land, and air. It portrays the power of the people to use environmental laws to protect their communities.

National Academy of Public Administration Studies - The National Academy of Public Administrators (NAPA) issued a trilogy of reports through a cooperative agreement with OEJ. The reports encompass environmental justice at the federal, state, and local/municipal government levels. *Environmental Justice in EPA Permitting: Reducing Pollution in High Risk Communities is Integral to EPA's Mission* examines practical areas for integration into site-specific air, water, and waste permits. In *Models for Change: Efforts by Four States to Address Environmental Justice*, NAPA examines several crosscutting and innovative approaches by four distinct states as they address environmental justice concerns. The third report, *Addressing Community Concerns: How Environmental Justice Relates to Land Use Planning and Zoning*, focuses on the role of local land-use and zoning practices in creating, addressing, and/or alleviating environmental justice issues.

Business/Industry Best Practices Study - OEJ commissioned the Marasco Newton Group and Michael Steinberg, Esq. to study industry-based perspectives on environmental justice. *A Study of Industry's Views and Approaches Regarding Environmental Justice* demystifies the businesses' perspectives, and provides insight to their proactive efforts. The purpose of the study is to examine how environmental justice can be more effectively integrated into the corporate decisionmaking process. The study identifies the key business concerns and highlights best industry practices that various businesses have adopted to address environmental justice issues when siting and permitting their facilities.

EPA's environmental justice publications are available online at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/resources/ej.html>

Hard copies can be ordered from the  
National Service Center for Environmental Publications at:  
(800) 490-9198  
<http://www.epa.gov/ncepihom>