



EJ Showcase Community Pilot

U.S. EPA | ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AT EPA NEW ENGLAND

EPA NEW ENGLAND'S ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROGRAM works to protect all people, regardless of race, color, national origin or income, from environmental harms and risks, and to involve all citizens in making decisions that affect their environment. The program is designed to achieve environmental and public health improvements for communities disproportionately burdened by the impacts of pollution.



INTRO:

EPA has committed \$1 million to address EJ challenges in 10 communities across the nation to help alleviate the environmental and human health challenges facing American communities. The EJ Showcase Communities effort brings together governmental and non-governmental organizations and pools their collective resources and expertise on the best ways to achieve real results in communities. EPA New England selected the city of Bridgeport, Conn. as its EJ Showcase Community Pilot. The region plans to develop projects focused on improving indoor air quality, increasing community capacity for green jobs, increasing recycling rates, and reducing asthma and toxic exposure.

OVERVIEW:

Bridgeport, Conn. was chosen to be EPA New England's Environmental Justice Showcase pilot mostly because the region had existing relationships with the community. Programs were already in place to address indoor air quality, green jobs, recycling asthma rates and toxic exposure in schools and homes. The region's Office of Civil Rights & Urban Affairs partnered with the region's Urban Environmental Program as well as community organizations to design and implement this pilot.

Funding from the EJ Showcase Community Pilot went to the city of Bridgeport, the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, Groundwork Bridgeport, Rhode Island Legal Services, and the Connecticut Section of American Water Works Association. The Bridgeport Board of Education and the city are using their grant to pilot a recycling program at two local schools. This pilot program is the first step towards comprehensive recycling and will serve as a model to all other Bridgeport schools. The Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice is using its grant to continue reducing asthma in Bridgeport by holding a community fair focused on asthma, which will also bring together organizations to share their strategies to reduce asthma rates. Groundwork Bridgeport is using its grant to improve water quality in Long Island Sound by training 20 youths on water resource protection and marking street drains that

must be kept clean. Rhode Island Legal Services is organizing the New England Environmental Justice Forum in an effort to gather together advocates working on EJ throughout the region. The Connecticut Section of American Water Works Association's partnered with the Water and People program and the Aquarion Water Company to develop a Water Boot Camp designed to prepare young people for careers in the water industry.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The city of Bridgeport has made a commitment to be a leader in addressing environmental issues. The city has seen a 70 percent increase in recycling rates in its East End neighborhood since the Board of Education and the city began their pilot program on recycling in public schools. Through the Connecticut Section of American Water Works Association, a successful two-week summer program trained 18 public school students on the water treatment process. This training is part of an effort to prepare young people for water industry careers. The EPA funded projects in Bridgeport align with Mayor Bill Finch's B-Green 2020 project. B-Green 2020 is a comprehensive program in Bridgeport to decrease carbon emissions, green the city, promote green jobs and technology, and ensure improved social and health benefits to its communities.

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