




UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

FEB 23 2018

OFFICE OF
POLICY

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: EPA's Environmental Justice and Community Revitalization Priorities

FROM: Samantha Dravis 
Associate Administrator, Office of Policy

TO: Assistant Administrators
Deputy Assistant Administrators
Regional Administrators
Deputy Regional Administrators

This past October marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the creation of the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), a testament to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) commitment to addressing the environmental and public health concerns of minority, low-income, and tribal and indigenous communities. EPA's dedication to furthering environmental justice (EJ) remains strong, and we look forward to sharing our forthcoming annual EJ report to highlight the progress we made during 2017. Throughout the decades, EPA has been committed to ensuring that all Americans see the full benefit of environmental protection and have a voice in our work and decisions. This is as true today – with Administrator Pruitt's emphasis on cleaning up Superfund sites and aggressively attacking exposure to lead – as it was when E.O. 12898 on Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations first delivered the mandate to integrate EJ throughout the federal government.

The move of OEJ into the Office of Policy (OP) is a reaffirmation of Administrator Pruitt's commitment to the mission and goals of the Agency's EJ program – to engage with and meet the needs of our nation's most vulnerable communities as they relate to disproportionate environmental impacts, health disparities, and economic distress. Elevating OEJ into OP will strengthen and complement our EJ work with the activities of many other offices, enabling EPA to provide better support to communities as we work to improve health, protect the environment and grow local economies for all people. The following goals align with the priorities identified in the Agency's FY 2018-2022 EPA Strategic Plan and build upon EPA's long history of progress in advancing EJ.

In support of our core mission of improving air quality, providing for clean and safe water, revitalizing land and preventing contamination, we will . . .

1. Achieve measurable environmental outcomes for underserved and overburdened communities in the areas of exposure to lead, access to safe drinking water, reduction of harmful air pollutants and limiting exposure to contamination from hazardous wastes.

2. Advance a more systematic approach to ensuring stronger consideration of vulnerable groups and communities in decisions through EPA's rulemaking, permitting, compliance and enforcement, and emergency response and recovery programs. This work will include development of guidelines and measures for training, implementation and use of EJ tools, resources and guidance (e.g. EJSCREEN, EJ Technical Guidance and Action Development Process Guidance, EJ and permitting framework, etc.). This approach should also ensure greater understanding of EJ by starting with community involvement and carrying through to recovery, redevelopment and revitalization, especially in EPA's place-based programs.

In the spirit of cooperative federalism, we will . . .

3. Strengthen the ability of our partner agencies to integrate EJ in their work through enhanced coordination and collaboration with states, tribes and local governments to address EJ concerns.
4. Invigorate partnerships with federal agencies to enhance interagency efforts to respond to the needs of vulnerable communities by leveraging existing resources to address EJ issues through the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice.
5. Request the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) engage with communities across the United States in each region to bring their concerns to the attention of the Administrator by the time of the NEJAC's first full in-person meeting in calendar year 2018.

In support of the rule of law and fair process, we will . . .

6. Improve EPA science to better understand the needs of underserved and overburdened communities, focusing on environmental problems where they are most acute for low-income, minority and tribal/indigenous populations, with an emphasis on public participation to identify solutions.
7. Champion the implementation of "*Promising Practices for Environmental Justice Methodologies in NEPA Reviews*" by encouraging its use across the federal family, engaging early to provide technical assistance to our federal partners, and by serving as a Cooperating Agency to promote a more effective, efficient, and consistent consideration of EJ on all federal projects.
8. Enhance coordination between the EJ and civil rights programs.

Finally, I am calling on every EPA Region, with support of the national programs, to identify those communities that would benefit from a coordinated approach to address EJ challenges. We will do this by strategically leveraging EPA's resources to enhance the capacity of communities to address their challenges through local innovation and to create conditions that support well-being, health and economic revitalization. In support of this initiative, we will . . .

9. Provide communities with access to the training, capacity building and technical assistance necessary to meaningfully engage in EPA's decision-making processes and to help develop and implement locally-led, community-driven solutions.
10. Expand support for communities through EPA programs, such as EJ Grants, Urban Waters, Brownfields and Area Wide Planning, and Building Blocks for Community Revitalization.
11. Elevate the role of EJ in place-based work and in fostering collaborations with multiple stakeholders, such as through port community pilot projects, brownfields to healthfields, and community revitalization planning assistance, especially in EPA's focus communities.
12. Commit to better alignment of our own programs and those of our federal partners to ensure that locally-led, community-driven solutions are supported and valued.

In the next month, OP is launching a convening of senior leadership through an Environmental Justice and Community Revitalization Council (formerly the EJ Council), which will provide leadership

through OEJ and the Office of Community Revitalization (OCR) for EPA's community-based work and where these strategic directions will be further discussed and implemented in alignment with EPA's new strategic plan. We are all proud of EPA's progress in pursuit of EJ over the past twenty-five years. Today, more people and communities have the protection and access to resources that we want all communities in our country to enjoy. We have cemented EJ as not just an ideal to be achieved. It is a deeply rooted commitment that helps us better achieve our mission to protect the environment and public health through collaboration, cooperative federalism and meaningful engagement. I look forward to working with all of you to carry on this critical work.

