

# I. Draft of Washington's Environmental Justice Definition

During the June 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting the EJ Task Force will continue to discuss creating a State definition for environmental justice. After reviewing feedback from the May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting from Task Force Members and community, we have amended the draft definition to the EJ definition proposed by Ecology:

***“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies; focusing on addressing disproportionate environmental and health impacts by prioritizing highly impacted communities, equitably distributing resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.”***

[See here](#) for previously discussed EJ draft definitions and corresponding member feedback.

## II. Questions to Guide Feedback

1. Would this definition impede your current obligations under the federal definition of EJ? If so, how?
2. What is missing from this definition?
3. What doesn't make sense?
4. Do you have other general comments or concerns? If so, please elaborate.

## III. Task Force Member & Community Feedback

### Department of Natural Resources

We recommend using Ecology's first proposed definition with small edits:

***“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies, with a focus on eliminating disparities in resources, benefits, and burdens and while prioritizing communities who experience the greatest inequities, disproportionate impacts, and have the most unmet needs.”***

**Explanation:** This definition is effective because it guides users to both recognize disparities and seek to reduce them through prioritizing highly impacted communities. The use of the word “prioritizing” is general enough that it leaves some flexibility, while being clear that some sort of prioritization is at the core of environmental justice. Including this distributional component is very important.

Changing from a semicolon to comma avoids creating a second clause that isn't a complete sentence (sorry for the grammatical note, just trying to keep it readable!). We think this definition overall is the shortest and clearest of those under consideration, increasing the chance that it will be read fully, understood, and used. And changing from “and” to “while” indicates that both “elimination” and “prioritization” go together.

Two other notes for reflection. We think the first part of the sentence that lists characteristics of communities is incomplete (as any such list likely would be), and could be improved by adding language such as “or any other perspective.” However we appreciate the staff and co-chair's recommendation to begin with the EPA's complete language, and simply wanted to make a note of this limitation in the EPA language.

Also, we think more conversation around what “reducing disparities” means is important. For example, if environmental health degrades for all it might technically reduce the disparity among groups, but we wouldn’t call that a success. The proposed language overall helps make clear we are aiming towards benefits and prioritization in positive direction so I think that is fine, but it is a flag for further discussion.

## Front & Centered

***“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, **immigration status**, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies; focusing on addressing disproportionate environmental and health impacts by prioritizing highly impacted communities, equitably distributing resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.”***

### Explanation:

- The Ecology proposal is being used as the new base definition as it eliminated concern F&C members had about original version had about distribution of harms
- Addition of ensuring fair treatment and meaningful involvement irrespective of immigration status
- Language of addressing disproportionate environmental impact and equitable distribution is a form of reparations. Please see below for a suggestion on how to approach a broader version of reparations in WA State.

DRAFT