

# Washington's Environmental Justice Task Force

## What is Environmental Justice (EJ)?

**Environmental justice (EJ) is the belief that everyone has the right to live, work, and play in a clean environment.**

The most contaminated and polluted environments in the U.S. are often located in communities of color and low-income communities, and this is not by accident. These communities have historically been left out from helping to make the decisions about what goes in their environment and often have more than their fair share of environmental burdens like landfills, industrial plants, shipyards, or an ongoing water crisis like in Flint, Michigan -- a city that is 63% non-white.

All of these environmental burdens negatively affect health, and Washington is not immune. Communities with a concentration of environmental hazards also have increased rates of cancer, asthma, high blood lead levels, psychological distress, and more. A [recent study](#) found that people in wealthy and predominately white neighborhoods in King County live 16 years longer than people in poor and predominately Black and Brown neighborhoods in the county.

## How is the Task Force Addressing Environmental Justice?

**The Task Force is meeting over a 16-month period to write a report** for the Governor and State Legislature due in October 2020 with recommendations for how to better incorporate environmental justice into state agency work. Specifically, the Task Force is developing recommendations for how the state government should:

- Use the Washington [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#)
- Conduct meaningful community engagement, especially in communities of color and low-income communities
- Establish measurable goals for eliminating environmental health disparities across Washington
- Prioritize communities, such as communities of color and low-income communities, that are highly impacted by environmental injustices

## Help Shape Task Force Recommendations!

**Community input is prioritized at every Task Force meeting.** Meetings are happening across the state in 2020, including monthly subcommittee meetings. This Task Force seeks to understand concerns regarding environmental justice across the political spectrum, among various state agencies, and within all communities in Washington.

Visit our website to [learn more](#) about the Task Force, view [meeting materials](#), and [provide public comment](#) at a future meeting or online about what changes you would like to see improve the health of your community.

## 2020 Public Meeting Dates

**Task Force Meetings:** April 2 | May 18 | June 22 | August 7

**Mapping Subcommittee Meetings:** Every second Wednesday of the month through June 2020

**Community Engagement Subcommittee Meetings:** Every first Tuesday of the month through June 2020

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