

Tentatively Approved Definition for WA Environmental Justice Definition

During the June 22nd Meeting the EJ Task Force tentatively approved the following proposal for a statewide definition for environmental justice. Task Force members are still considering incorporating more social groups in the first portion of the definition.

Tentatively Approved EJ Definition for Washington:

“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 including focusing on addressing disproportionate environmental and health impacts by prioritizing highly impacted communities, equitably distributing resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.”

Questions for Feedback:

- Should the Task Force **keep the definition as is**?
- Should the Task Force **expand the definition to include more groups**?
- Should the Task Force **use a “catch-all” term to refer to social groups**?

Example of a catch all term: “The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, or any other social identity with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies including focusing on addressing disproportionate environmental and health impacts by prioritizing highly impacted communities, equitably distributing resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.”

Considerations

- Staff and Co-Chairs encourage you to think specifically about groups like communities of color and low-income communities that are most directly burdened by EJ issues.
- The first clause of the statewide definition is the federal EJ definition. In order to ensure state agencies are aligned with the federal definition, we will not change or omit words in the first clause of the statewide definition. You may, however, advocate for adding to the first clause.
 - **Federal Definition:** “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.”

Explanation of Draft Definition:

- This definition is meant to guide institutions, including Washington State agencies, with identifying environmental justice issues in addition to the EPA’s definition that has a procedural equity focus.
- This definition does not replace the purposes that an EJ mission statement, EJ goals, EJ principles, or community EJ definitions serve.
- In an effort to avoid contradicting the EPA and to keep important EJ considerations intact, the full EJ definition from the EPA is embedded within this proposed definition for EJ in Washington.
- This enhanced definition adds a distributional equity component in the second half of the sentence.