

Environmental Justice Task Force

Recommendations for Prioritizing EJ in Washington State Government

The [Environmental Justice Task Force](#) (EJTF) was created through a proviso in the state's 2019-21 operating budget (Engrossed Substitute [House Bill 1109](#), section 221, subsection 48). The EJTF was required to provide recommendations for:

- 1) How to best use the **Environmental Health Disparities Map**;
- 2) Lowering barriers to **community engagement**; and
- 3) **Measurable goals and model policies** to reduce environmental health disparities.

Recommendations were developed in partnership with communities across WA, and focus on **creating statewide infrastructure** to meaningfully and systematically work toward EJ. The EJTF recognizes that the fight for justice is ongoing—it did not begin with, nor will it end with, the EJTF. **Now is the time to take action.**

Measurable Goals & Model Policy Recommendations to Reduce Environmental Health Disparities

Improving Government Accountability to Communities

1. **Track & communicate progress** in partnership with communities
2. Convene a **permanent interagency EJ Workgroup** of staff including representatives from overburdened communities

Incorporating EJ into Government

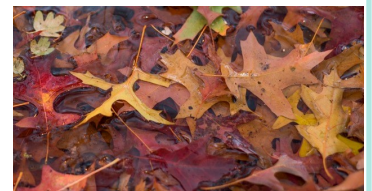
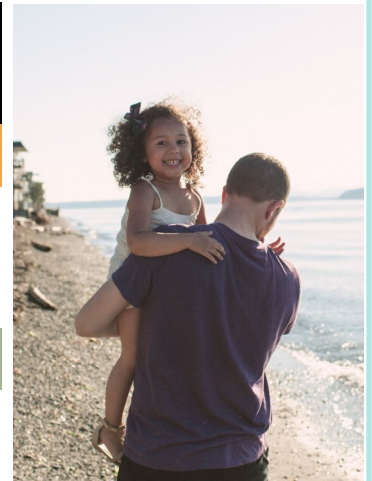
3. **Embed EJ in agency strategic plans** to integrate EJ into protocols and processes
4. Include **dedicated EJ staff** in state agencies to integrate EJ principles and equity more broadly
5. **Incorporate EJ into state environmental laws**, and consider EJ when developing legislation, analyzing bills and conducting reviews

Investing Equitably


6. **Require use of EJ analysis**, such as the Environmental Health Disparity Map, to help guide agency decision-making
7. **Equitably distribute state environmental investments** to ensure resources are allocated to overburdened communities
8. **Prioritize high labor standards & diversity in contracting** to increase inclusion and protect workers' health and safety
9. **Study opportunities for reparations** as a mechanism to address health disparities and historical harms affecting overburdened communities


Improving Environmental Enforcement

10. **Ensure accessible enforcement & reporting processes** by elevating awareness and addressing barriers such as technology, literacy, and language
11. Support **Supplemental Environmental Projects** to the extent practicable and appropriate

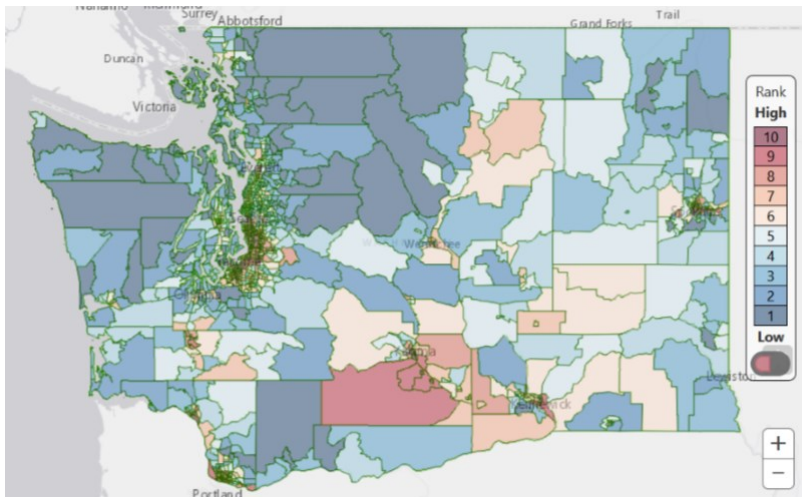


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Mapping and Community Engagement Recommendations



The Environmental Health Disparities (EHD) Map

The [EHD map](#) compares census tracts across Washington to better understand communities' health as well as the social, economic, and environmental impacts that influence them. The EHD map can be used by state agencies to improve accountability, engagement, and transparency toward EJ goals.

Using the Environmental Health Disparities (EHD) Map to Identify Overburdened Communities

The report includes recommendations for using the EHD map for a more equitable distribution of environmental benefits across communities, with additional technical guidance in the appendix of the report. Five EHD map recommendations are detailed in the report, including:

State agencies consider four initial ways of using the EHD map and data:

- Build demographic and environmental context to guide and inform place-based activities.
- Conduct EJ review and analysis as routine practice for programs and projects.
- Center EJ as the priority intended outcome in resource allocation decision processes.
- Evaluate and measure reductions in disparities through service equity improvements.

Use the overall EHD map rank 9 and 10 as a starting point to identify overburdened communities.

Recommendations for Addressing Structural Barriers to Community Engagement

Meaningful community engagement is central to EJ work: It builds more sustainable agency programs and decisions, and it increases community understanding of agency decisions, **transparency and trust in government actions**. The EJTF report includes ten recommendations for increasing inclusive community engagement. The report appendix includes guidance to support the creation of **agency community engagement plans**—a key recommendation of the report—to address common barriers to meaningful engagement. The EJTF also recommends **changing laws that restrict agencies** from purchasing goods and services that support community participation.

"One of the key components in environmental justice is getting people to the table to speak for themselves...they need to be in the room where policy is being made."

—Dr. Robert Bullard,
"the Father of EJ"

Recommended Statewide EJ Definition

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. This includes using an intersectional lens to address disproportionate environmental and health impacts by prioritizing highly impacted populations, equitably distributing resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.

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