



One Year Later: New Wave of Environmental Justice Initiatives

The ripple effect of federal agencies' responses to Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, is apparent in the recent wave of new environmental justice initiatives. Published at the beginning of last year, the Order established the first White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council to ensure a “whole-of-government” approach to addressing current and historical environmental injustices. The approach includes strengthening environmental justice monitoring and enforcement through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

At the SURF Membership Meeting, SURF Secretary Stacey Hellekson (Woodard & Curran) explained that environmental justice frameworks are changing and taking a similar holistic approach to evaluate environmental impacts. Case in point? The EPA updated its Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJScreen 2.0) to include parameters representing a broader scope (see below).

- Data showing communities with gaps in food availability, medical services, and broadband internet
- New drought and wildfire data
- Health inequity data showing metrics for life expectancy, asthma, and heart disease
- Updated demographic data from the latest Census

Other examples highlighted in this issue demonstrate that the social aspect of

sustainability is no longer an afterthought, but a key factor when evaluating environmental impacts.



Dive In! EPA Enforcement and Compliance Directives

SURFers at the Membership Meeting discussed the EPA's enforcement and compliance directives issued last year in response to the mandate in Executive Order 14008 to "strengthen enforcement of environmental violations with disproportionate impact on underserved communities." The directives are listed below and can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

- *Strengthening Enforcement in Communities with Environmental Justice Concerns* (April 30, 2021)
 - *Strengthening Environmental Justice through Criminal Enforcement* (June 21, 2021)
 - *Strengthening Environmental Justice through Cleanup Enforcement Actions* (July 1, 2021)
 - *Using All Appropriate Injunctive Relief Tools in Civil Enforcement Settlements* (April 26, 2021)
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Did You Know? U.S. EPA Publishes Equity Action Plan

On April 22, 2022, the EPA published its *E.O. 13985 Equity Action Plan*. The plan was developed to fulfill the requirements of Executive Order 13985, *Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, which calls on federal agencies to recognize and work to redress inequities in their policies and programs that serve as barriers to equal opportunity. In the plan, the EPA states that “this means everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the benefits of environmental resources and the decision-making process.”

The EPA's 28-page plan aligns with the EPA's strategic plan (see [April SURF Break](#)) and outlines six priority actions that serve as a foundation for current and future efforts.

Specifically, the plan supports the EPA's Agency Priority Goal to achieve the following by September 30, 2023:

- Develop and implement a cumulative impacts framework.
- Issue guidance on external civil rights compliance.
- Establish a set of indicators to track agency performance in eliminating disparities in environmental and public health conditions.
- Train staff and partners on how to use these resources.

For each priority action, the plan describes the barriers to equitable outcomes and planned actions to overcome the barriers and provides clear lines of accountability. To read the plan, click [here](#).

Upcoming Events

EJScreen 2.0 Office Hours

June 15, 2022

12 p.m. ET

EPA is holding Office Hours on a bimonthly basis so EJScreen users can ask experts how to use and apply the tool, discuss technical issues, and bring up other questions.

Click [here](#) to join.

To access recordings of prior office hour sessions, click [here](#).

Science and Sustainable Global Communities

Air & Waste Management Association's Annual Conference and Exhibition

June 27-30, 2022

San Francisco, California

For more information or to register, click [here](#).
