

Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice

Fiscal Year 2018 Progress Report



*Working together
towards collaborative
& innovative solutions.*





FY18 Federal Interagency Working Group Progress Report

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Ashley Logan, 2018 Educate, Motivate and Innovate student presenter at the National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program in Washington D.C.

EJ IWG Agencies

Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Department of Commerce (DOC)

Department of Defense (DOD)

Department of Education (ED)

Department of Energy (DOE)

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Department of the Interior (DOI)

Department of Justice (DOJ)

Department of Labor (DOL)

Department of Transportation (DOT)

Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

General Services Administration (GSA)

White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)



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Introduction

The [Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice](#) (EJ IWG), chaired by the EPA Administrator, is comprised of 17 federal agencies and White House offices with standing committees and other committees established as necessary to carry out responsibilities outlined by the 1994 Executive Order 12898, "[Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations](#)" (EO 12898). The EJ IWG consists of senior leadership representatives, senior staff representatives, and other persons delegated by an agency. This report demonstrates progress that the EJ IWG has accomplished over Fiscal Year (FY) 2018.

The EJ IWG facilitates the active involvement of all federal agencies to implement EO 12898, which directs that federal agencies must identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. Established through the Order, the EJ IWG provides leadership, guidance and support for federal agencies to collectively advance environmental justice principles. The EJ IWG works as a federal family to bring partners and resources together, and increase local community capacity to promote and implement innovative and comprehensive solutions to environmental justice issues. The EJ IWG recognizes that information fosters action and a common understanding of environmental justice challenges. The three guiding principles for the federal government are:

- **Accessibility** — easily reached by communities, advocates, and other stakeholders regarding environmental justice concerns;
- **Awareness** — knowledgeable of the environmental justice concerns and issues facing communities in order to facilitate collaboration and coordination; and
- **Accountability** — capable of explaining the actions and decisions related to the implementation of E.O. 12898.

This FY 2018 report highlights the primary focus areas of the EJ IWG: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Rural Community Engagement, Goods Movement, Native American/Indigenous Peoples, Regional Engagement and the National Environmental Policy Act. In FY18, the EJ IWG also prioritized efforts on strengthening connections between:

- Federal Agencies and Communities,
- Stakeholders and EJ Tools & Resources,
- Various Stakeholders During Post-Natural Disaster Recovery, and
- The EJ IWG and Future EJ Leaders.

For a list of EJ IWG Committees (as of May 2018), please see Appendix A. For a list of agency contacts for the EJ IWG, please visit the [Agency Contacts webpage](#).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines Environmental Justice as:

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.



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Connecting Federal Agencies to Communities

The EJ IWG is committed to being *Accessible, Aware and Accountable* to its stakeholders through digital and in-person outreach. The following are some FY 2018 highlights of EJ IWG members engaging with communities and other stakeholders:

- In Los Angeles, California, the Goods Movement Committee presented at the Moving Forward Network 4th Annual Conference to increase awareness of the EJ IWG's [Goods Movement Federal Resources Compendium](#) among community organizations and other conference participants. The compendium identifies the tools that can be used to mitigate externalities related to goods movement.
- In Savannah, Georgia, the Goods Movement Committee visited a local Near-Port Community Capacity Building Pilot Project site to discuss the community's action plan and raised the awareness of community members and other stakeholders (e.g. port authority and other local government) of the Goods Movement Committee as a potential resource.
- In Seattle, Washington, the Goods Movement Committee facilitated the community of Beacon Hill's access to engage with the Federal Aviation Administration to collectively address noise and air quality concerns stemming from a nearby airport.
- To assist Lowndes County, Alabama, the Rural Communities Committee convened a local Interagency Working Group and facilitated dialogue with federal, regional, state and local government and community stakeholders to address health, economic and environmental challenges related to long-standing rural wastewater infrastructure issues. Participants included several federal agencies, including the Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), General Services Administration (GSA) and EPA; the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), the Alabama State Agency for Surplus Personal Property; and other stakeholders. After connecting with these stakeholders, ADPH was able to access surplus supplies (e.g., backhoes, dump trucks, etc.) valued at almost \$1 million for no cost. Federal EJ efforts are ongoing to assist 100 families in Lowndes County obtain decentralized sewer systems.



Tami Thomas-Burton & Sabrina Johnson (EPA) awarded Certificates of Appreciation to Dr. McClain (Harambee House), Dr. Caroline Bell (Savannah Mayor Pro Tem), and Hope Moorner (Georgia Ports Authority) for their outstanding partnership with EPA's 1st Near-port Community Capacity Building Pilot Project.



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Connecting Stakeholders to EJ Tools and Resources

As the EJ IWG worked to remain accessible by connecting communities to federal agencies, it also continued to connect stakeholders to valuable tools and resources. The EJ IWG developed online tools, resources and webinars to share information broadly and help the public address environmental justice concerns in their local communities through existing laws. Examples of this work include the following below.

National Environmental Policy Act ([NEPA](#)) Trainings:

- *Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Federal NEPA Contacts Webinar* — The [EJ IWG NEPA Committee](#) conducted a webinar for federal agency partners to raise agency awareness and facilitate implementation of the [“Promising Practices for EJ Methodologies in NEPA Reviews”](#) (Promising Practices) resource.
- *2018 National Environmental Justice Conference & Training Program (NEJC) Community Guide to Environmental Justice and NEPA Methods Workshop* — This session conducted by the EJ IWG NEPA Committee increased awareness of a new tool, [“Community Guide to Environmental Justice and NEPA Methods”](#) (Community Guide) which is a companion document to the Promising Practices document. The workshop fostered collaboration among the federal agencies and the public. Participants gained a better knowledge of what practices federal agencies use to evaluate environmental impacts to minority and low-income populations and how they can be a more effective advocate for their communities in agency decision-making processes.



NEPA Committee Training & Workshop at the 2018 NEJC

Civil Rights Law Trainings:

- *2018 NEJC Conference Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Training* — The EJ IWG Title VI Committee conducted this session to provide participants with an overview of Title VI, its application to environmental justice scenarios, and information on how to file a complaint with a federal agency and how such complaints are processed.
- *EJ IWG Access and Awareness Webinar Series: Civil Rights in Federally Assisted Disaster Preparedness and Recovery* — This webinar covered efforts to protect communities before, during and after an emergency event, including interagency activities to ensure nondiscrimination in each phase of emergency management. It was presented by four federal agencies: Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Transportation (DOT), and Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Webinar recording can be found on the [EJ IWG Webinars](#) webpage.



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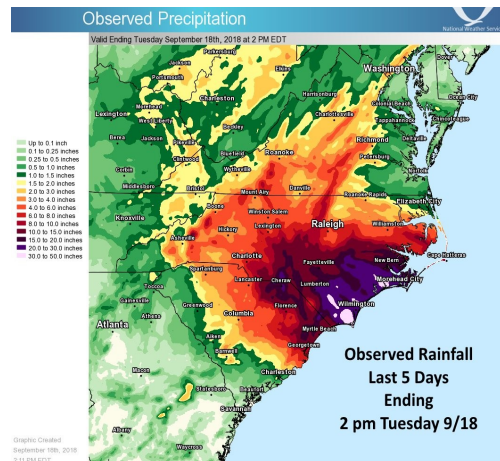
Connecting Stakeholders during Post-Disaster Recovery

In addition to conducting a webinar on *Civil Rights in Federally Assisted Disaster Preparedness and Recovery*, the EJ IWG prioritized working with partners to support equitable natural disaster recovery actions. Based on lessons learned from previous natural disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina and Maria, the EJ IWG worked to support minority and low-income populations suffering from chronic conditions that are disproportionately vulnerable in the event of a disaster. Here are two examples of those efforts:

Hurricane Florence

In September 2018, Hurricane Florence caused severe damage along the North Carolina coast, including widespread power outages, storm surge and rainfall resulting in flooding. The EJ IWG worked with EPA (Office of Environmental Justice, Region 4), USDA (Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service), HHS (Health Resource Services Administration, Office of the Assistant Secretary, National Diabetes Education Program), DHS, American Diabetes Association, Diabetes Disaster Recovery Association, American Optometric Association and Insulin for Life, among others, after the disaster to:

- develop and activate a network of community and environmental justice and health care providers to receive and share information on diabetes care in natural disasters;
- distribute information from federal agencies, non-profit organizations and medical providers on diabetes, pharmacies and shelters, health care providers, storing insulin and safe disposal of sharp objects; and
- connect organizations providing insulin and disease management supplies free of charge to those with diabetes through emergency response personnel in storm areas.



U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration observed rainfall map from
Hurricane Florence

Hurricane Harvey

In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey made landfall along the Middle Texas Coast and stalled over Texas for days. After causing severe flooding over South and Southeast Texas, Harvey made its final landfall near Cameron, Louisiana, causing more heavy rainfall and flooding. The environmental, health and economic impacts of natural disasters continue long after a storm occurs. The EJ IWG worked with EPA, USDA, HHS, DHS, Lone Star Legal Aid, Texas Campaign for the Environment, Coalition for Environmental Equity and Resilience (CEER), Cities Changing Diabetes (CCD) and member organizations to:

- Conduct training in July 2018 on leveraging the Brownfields to Healthfields (B2H) approach for Disaster Recovery in collaboration with Lone Star Legal Aid. B2H is a community centric, multi-stakeholder strategy that brings partners (e.g., government, academia, nonprofits, healthcare, agriculture) together to transform brownfields, a property with presence or potential presence of a hazard, pollutant or contaminant, into spaces that strengthen community health, equity, sustainability, and resiliency. Over 40 organizations participated in the training. A follow-up meeting was held to discuss specific issues and interests of communities impacted by contaminated sites experiencing flooding.



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- Convene a facilitated dialogue with CCD to align resources and interests. For example, CCD is producing a tool kit for addressing diabetes during storm events. Further, member organizations of CCD are interested in redeveloping brownfields to increase access to health care for minority and low-income populations.
- Convene a series of meetings to link EJ communities with federal departments and local governments interested in applying urban agriculture as a flood control measure.

Connecting with Leaders of the Future: Strengthening Youth Engagement

The EJ IWG strives to engage and elevate the next generation of environmental justice leaders by providing opportunities for them to present their work and share their insights. Here are two examples:

EJ IWG Access and Awareness Webinar Series: *A Seat at the Table: Environmental Justice and a New Generation of Leaders* — This webinar provided insights and strategies from young adults on how to engage and support youth leadership in environmental justice. The conversation featured Carol E. Ramos-Gerena - Urban and Environmental Planning, University of Puerto Rico - Rio Piedras Campus; Eriqah R. K. Vincent - National Eco-Leaders Coordinator, National Wildlife Federation; and Jeremy May - VISTA Member with the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation and Enforcement (Dept. of Interior), Mountain Studies Institute. Webinar recordings can be found at [EJ IWG Webinars](#).

National Environmental Justice Conference & Training Program: *EMI Student Plenary Session*

As part of the EJ IWG's [Educate Motivate Innovate \(EMI\) Initiative](#), four students [presented](#) at the [2018 National Environmental Justice Conference & Training Program](#) in Washington, DC:

- *Kareem Heshmat* (Texas Southern University) discussed “Green Infrastructure, Low Income Communities and Environmental Justice.”
- *Carol Ramos-Gerena* (University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras), a presenter in 2017, was invited back in 2018 to provide an update, “Lessons Learned from Experience in Action-Research Approaches for Agroecological Education in Puerto Rico.”
- *Ashley Logan* (Virginia State University) spoke about the “Impact of Climate Change in Virginia: Discussion on Economic Growth and Low-Income Population.”
- *Juan Lazo Bautista* (Hispanic Access Foundation Resource Assistant, USDA Forest Service) addressed “Conservation Education: Speaking to Human Potential.”



EMI student presenters at NEJC 2018, listed from left to right:
Kareem Heshmat, Ashley Logan, Carol Ramos-Gerena and Juan Lazo
Bautista

For more information on the EMI students and their presentations, please visit the [2018 “Educate Motivate Innovate” Student Panelists](#) webpage.



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Conclusion

In fiscal year 2018, the EJ IWG continued its long-standing effort to ensure individuals from vulnerable communities have the opportunity to have their issues heard and addressed by federal agencies. Through in-person and digital outreach, engagement, and collaboration the EJ IWG reached over 1,000 individual stakeholders in FY 18. The interagency working group will focus on strengthening place-based, multi-agency collaboration and disaster recovery efforts in the coming year.

The EJ IWG will also continue working to connect communities with federal agencies, along with tools and resources to address environmental justice concerns. In the upcoming fiscal year, the EJ IWG will publish new resource documents, including a [*Guide to Finding Federal Assistance and Resources for Environmental Justice Efforts*](#) factsheet that provides tips on searching for resources, tools, funding and technical assistance and a [*Community Guide to Environmental Justice and NEPA Methods*](#) that provides communities with information on how to effectively engage and advocate in federal agency actions and decisions.

STAY CONNECTED!

Find more resources and information on the EJ IWG Website:

<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/federal-interagency-working-group-environmental-justice-ej-iwg>

To receive updates on EJ tools and resources from across the federal government, sign up for EPA's EJ Listserv:

https://lists.epa.gov/read/all_forums/subscribe?name=epa-ej

To contact the EJ IWG, call the
EJ Hotline 800-962-6215 (toll-free).



**The EJ IWG helps ensure
the federal government
is:**

Accessible

Easily reached by
communities,
advocates, and other
stakeholders regarding
environmental justice
concerns

Aware

Knowledgeable of the
environmental justice
concerns
and issues facing
communities in
order to facilitate
collaboration
and coordination

Accountable

Capable of explaining the
actions and decisions
related
to the implementation of
Executive Order 12898



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APPENDIX A: EJ IWG Committees – May 2018

COMMITTEE	COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON/CO-CHAIRPERSON	PURPOSE
Strategy and Implementation Progress Report Committee	EPA and DOJ	Serves as a resource for federal agencies as they review, update, or develop their environmental justice strategy, and the annual implementation progress reports. Works with agencies to help coordinate programs, policies, and activities. Coordinates EJ IWG Sr. Leadership Meetings. Manages implementation of the EJ IWG Framework for Collaboration and standard operating procedures.
Regional IWG	EPA and HUD	Provides targeted and coordinated technical assistance, develops relationships between federal field and regional staff, and develops best practices for prioritizing EJ concerns. Develops community resource materials. Strengthens education, training, and/or engagement on EJ among local and state agencies. Implement Educate, Motivate, Initiate student project and the Access & Awareness Webinar Series.
Native Americans/ Indigenous Peoples	DOJ	Facilitates effective coordination and collaboration of federal agencies in identifying and addressing issues of environmental justice that are concern to federally recognized tribes, indigenous peoples, and others living in Indian Country.
Rural Communities	USDA and EPA	Supports efforts to ensure: collaboration between federal agencies and rural environmental justice communities, develop economic opportunities so rural overburdened communities are self-sustaining and economically thriving, and coordinate federal agency investments to further holistic community-based solutions that reduce environmental justice issues.
Impacts from Commercial Transportation “Goods Movement”	HUD, DOT/Federal Rail Road Administration and EPA	Serves as a resource to coordinate with other federal agencies on reducing environmental and health effects of commercial transportation and supporting infrastructure (“goods movement”) that impact low-income, minority and tribal populations (overburdened communities). Ensures that overburdened communities have greater opportunities to access benefits from federal efforts related to goods movement.
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)	DOE and HUD	Improves effective, efficient and consistent consideration of environmental justice principles in the NEPA process by sharing promising practices and lessons learned developed by federal departments and agencies.
Title VI of the Civil Rights Act	DOJ	Serves a resource to help agencies connect their civil rights enforcement responsibilities with their other efforts to achieve environmental justice.
Public Participation	DOJ and EPA	Increases transparency, language accessible outreach and addresses technological barriers. Develops listening sessions and opportunities for public input. Facilitates collaboration and public participation with federal agencies and external stakeholders. Utilizes traditional means of communication and social media to build participation, Helps coordinate responses to public input.



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