Institutional Commitment to Equity, Justice, & Civil Rights: Evidence from U.S. EPA

2024 Social Equity Leadership Conference
Achieving Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access in an Increasingly Divided World
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Evidence found in many areas...

→ Structural: org chart
→ Administrative: policies & guidance
→ Investments: financial & technical
→ Tools: evidence-based
Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights

Objective 2.1 Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State, and Local Levels

Objective 2.2 Embed Environmental Justice and Civil Rights into EPA’s Programs, Policies, and Activities

Objective 2.3 Strengthen Civil Rights Enforcement in Communities with Environmental Justice Concerns
Objective 2.1: Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State, and Local Levels

Long Term Performance Goal 2.1.3: By September 30, 2026, EPA programs with direct implementation authority will take at least 100 significant actions that will result in measurable improvements in Indian country.

Strategy: Integrating Environmental Justice Principles into the Implementation of Federal Environmental Programs in Indian Country and in Other Areas of Interest to Tribes, in Partnership with Federally Recognized Tribes: Equity principles and equal protection require that implementation of federal environmental law protections be as robust inside Indian country as EPA requires these protections to be outside of Indian country. Ensuring EPA direct implementation of federal environmental programs in Indian country is in keeping with the federal trust responsibility and incorporating environmental justice principles when the Agency directly implements federal environmental programs will advance environmental justice for federally recognized Tribes.
Investments

Justice40 at EPA

January 2021, President Biden’s Executive Order 14008 – Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad announced Justice40, which mandates that at least 40% of the benefits of certain federal investments must flow to disadvantaged communities.

EPA has 79 J40 programs listed - rewards responsive over neutral competence.

Note: Bureau of Indian Affairs has 18; US Fish and Wildlife Service has 8; and Bureau of Land Management has 5.

“EJ Screen” - Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool

- A nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and socioeconomic indicators.
- EPA’s web-based GIS tool for nationally consistent EJ screening and mapping
- Combines environmental and demographic data to highlight areas where vulnerable populations may be disproportionately impacted by pollution
- Starting point for agency considerations of environmental justice
“EJ Screen”

- Annually updated environmental data
- Annually updated demographics – U.S. Census Bureau
- American Community Survey (ACS)
- Highest resolution data available
- Ability to download data
- Accessibility / ease of use
“EJ Screen” - Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool

- Has “substantial uncertainty” in socioeconomic and environmental data, particularly for small geographic areas.
- Not intended to provide a risk assessment.
- Does not provide data on every environmental impact and socioeconomic indicator that may be relevant to a particular location.
- Results should be supplemented with additional information and local knowledge.
Various tools are available to help identify EPA regulated entities that may affect tribal interests and inform EPA program implementation priorities, including:

The Facility Registry Service (FRS)
Enf. & Compliance Hist. Online (ECHO)
Envirofacts
EJScreen
EnviroAtlas

Under the 2022-2026 EPA Strategic Plan, EPA is committed to improving access to regulated entity information using EJScreen; efforts are underway to identify opportunities to improve data quality.
Observations

❖ What is “Equity”? - definitions matter
❖ President’s Budget v. Appropriation - politics
❖ Achieving Equity v. Promoting Equity - outcomes v. rhetoric
❖ Scope and Scale - individual v. collective equity
Scope and Scale

North American Crude Oil Pipelines
source: Enbridge
North American Gas Pipelines

source: Enbridge
Scope and Scale