US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Environmental Justice Federal Interagency Working Group

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson speaking at the at the White House forum on environmental justice.

White House EJ Forum Success Story

Less than four months after reconvening in December 2010, the White House, EJ IWG members, cabinet secretaries, senior officials and representatives from a wide range of federal agencies would work collaboratively to convene the first-ever White House Forum on Environmental Justice. The forum brought together administration officials, community leaders and officials from state, local and tribal governments to discuss issues that were important to communities overburdened with pollution.

Administration leaders shared their vision for healthier and more sustainable communities and their proposed approaches for their agencies to achieve them. Administration officials also engaged community leaders in discussions on federal agency initiatives that were underway and encouraged feedback on those initiatives.

The forum reinvigorated federal environmental justice action under EO 12898 at the Administration level and led to a successful exchange of information between federal agencies and external environmental justice advocates.

EJ IWG Cabinet-level officials reconvening for the first time in 10 years.

About the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group

The Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group (EJ IWG) was established in 1994 under Executive Order (EO) 12898. It is comprised of 17 federal agencies and White House offices to guide, support, and enhance federal environmental justice and community-based activities. In September 2010, the EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) reconvened the EJ IWG for the first time in more than a decade. The Cabinet-level meeting was one of a series of steps taken by the Obama Administration to elevate environmental justice and address the inequities in low-income communities.

Engaging Agencies to Understand and Address EJ Issues

Following the announcement of seven top EPA priorities in 2010, the agency's Administrator, Lisa P. Jackson directed EPA programs and regional offices to address the needs of overburdened communities by reducing environmental problems, expanding environmental benefits, and by working alongside communities as they aim to become healthier, greener and more sustainable. As an important element of the agency's environmental justice strategy (Plan EJ 2014), EPA seeks to facilitate the active participation of federal agencies in a coordinated approach that acknowledges the disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental impacts on overburdened communities, while providing access to the environmental, public health, and economic benefits of their programs.

On August 4, 2011, EJ IWG agencies took a landmark step to support environmental justice by signing the Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898 (EJ MOU). The EJ MOU serves as a formal agreement between federal agencies to recommit to environmental justice through a more collaborative, comprehensive, and contemporary effort. It is a formal commitment to:

1. Declare continued importance of identifying and addressing environmental justice considerations in agency programs, policies, and activities;
2. Agree to provide environmental justice strategies and implementation progress reports;
3. Adopt an EJ MOU charter that establishes structures and procedures to ensure a more effective and efficient EJ IWG; and
4. Identify particular areas of focus.

These commitments, in coordination with Plan EJ 2014, ensures a strong and sustained effort to integrate environmental justice into programs, policies and activities across the federal government.

Did You Know?

February 2014 marks the 20th Anniversary of Executive Order 12989, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minoriy Populations and Low-Income Populations." President Clinton Signed the Exective Order on February 11, 1994.

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Expanding the Conversation

working for environmental justice

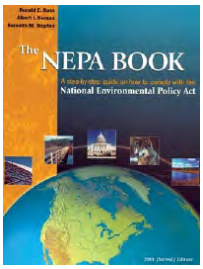
EJ IWG *FACTS*

Fostering Administration-Wide Action

As each federal agency works to advance its environmental justice integration efforts, EPA helps agencies participate in a coordinated approach as a part of Plan EJ 2014. The EJ IWG focuses on these four strategies:

- **Assist other federal agencies to integrate environmental justice into their programs, policies, and activities.** EPA leads federal efforts to better integrate environmental justice as chair of the EJ IWG. Each federal agency's committments have been articulated in environmental justice strategies which are available publicly. To monitor this progress, the EJ MOU requires each federal agency to release implementation progress reports. These implementation reports include performance measures to better ensure that agencies meet their environmental justice responsibilities and goal, including any updates or revisions to the agency's environmental justice strategy.

- **Work with other federal agencies to strengthen use of interagency legal tools.** National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are important tools that can be used to help advance the goals of environmental justice. EPA works internally and across all agencies to strengthen their programs, enhance their abilities to incorporate environmental justice into major federal activities and to understand the legal tools available to them to promote environmental justice.



- **Foster healthy and sustainable communities.** EPA, in conjunction with other federal agencies, coordinates agencies actions to improve the health and sustainability of overburdened communities, including looking at climate adaptation and goods movement. For example, the Sustainable Communities Partnership**,** a partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Transportation, and EPA improves access to affordable housing, transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment in communities nationwide.

Stakeholder listening session in Albuquerque, NM

- **Strengthen community access to federal agencies.** In order to strengthen the ability of communities to access federal programs and expertise, the EJ IWG acts to eliminate barriers, make connections, and reduce duplication so that communities are better able to access federal resources. To implement this strategy, the EJ IWG began holding Stakeholder Dialogue Sessions, providing an opportunity for stakeholders to identify community concerns, discuss best practices and model programs. Since 2012, the IWG has held 19 dialogue sessions and continues to conduct these meetings across the country.

EJ IWG Timeline

- **February 2012** — Agencies release environmental justice strategies
- **August 2011** — Federal agencies sign EJ MOU and adopt EJ IWG charter
- **December 2010** — Community Stakeholder Dialogue Sessions begin
- **December 2010** — EPA and CEQ host 1st White House Forum on EJ
- **September 2010** — White House reconvenes EJ IWG meetings

Resources

IWG Compendium: Contains a list of EJ IWG federal agencies and strategies, policies, guidance documents and plans for implementing EO 12898.

Environmental Justice Federal Interagency Directory: Information about federal agency roles, organization charts and key contact information for agency program areas.

The Community-Based Federal Environmental Justice Guide: Information on federal programs that may assist communities in reducing toxic exposures by providing technical assistance, federal funding or a combination of both.

These resources can be accessed at epa.gov/environmentaljustice/interagency.

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For More Information

To find out more about the EJ IWG, call 202-564-2515 or visit www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/interagency

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