

# Environmental Justice in Region 3

Local Government Advisory Committee  
Chesapeake Bay Program



September 29, 2021

**“What do local governments need to engage with underserved communities?”**



# Presenters

## Office of Communities, Tribes and Environmental Assessment (OCTEA)

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# Presentation Summary

- Overview of Environmental Justice
  - Fair Treatment
  - Meaningful Involvement
- Introduction to EJSCREEN
- Recent Funding Opportunities
  - Justice40
  - Recent Legislation
  - Future of Grants



# Overview of Environmental Justice



# What is Environmental Justice (EJ)?

- 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.



# What is EJ? – Fair Treatment

- **Fair treatment** means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies.



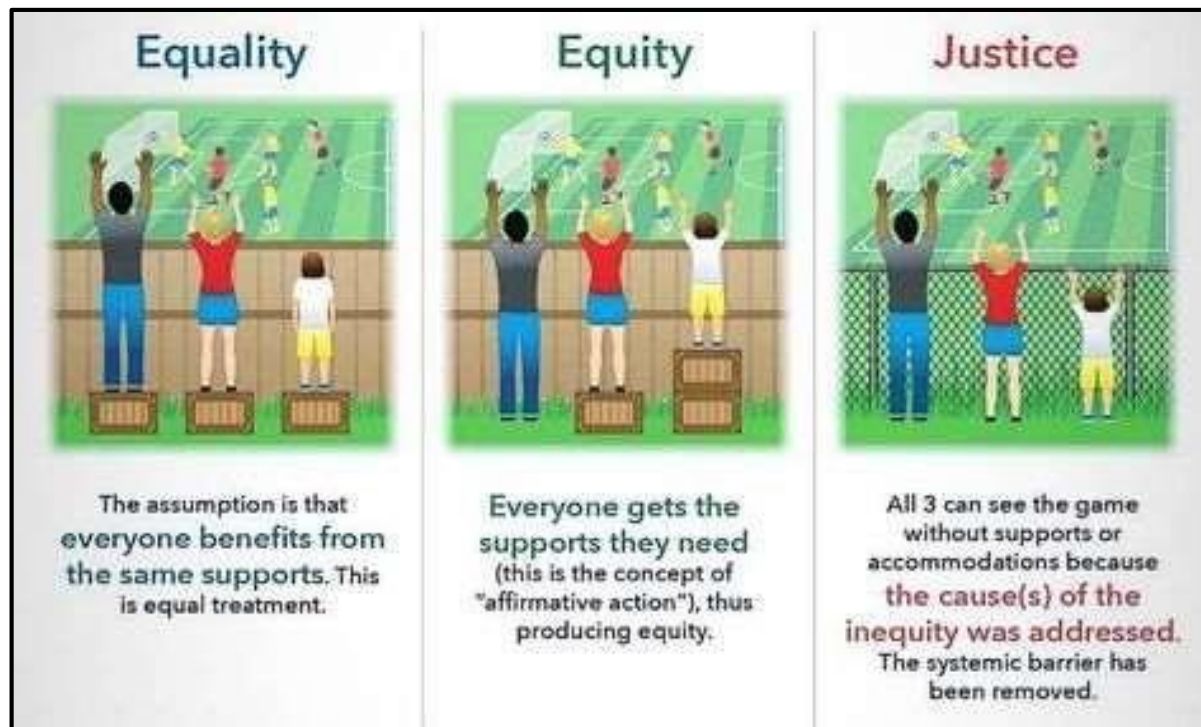
# What is EJ? Meaningful Involvement

- **Meaningful involvement** means:
  - People have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health
  - The public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision
  - Community concerns will be considered in the decision making process
  - Decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected





# Meaningful Involvement (Cont'd.)

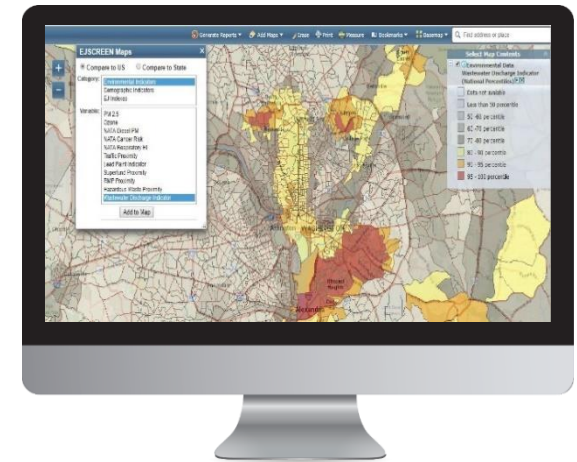


# Overview of EJSCREEN



# What is EJSCREEN?

- EJSCREEN is EPA's web-based GIS tool for nationally consistent EJ screening and mapping
- EJSCREEN combines environmental and demographic data to highlight areas where **vulnerable populations** may be **disproportionately impacted** by pollution



# Caveats and Limitations

- Environmental indicators are mostly screening-level proxies for actual exposure or risk
- Indicators vary in vintage
- EJSCREEN does not cover all environmental or EJ issues
- Census records have limitations
- Results should be verified on the ground when possible
- EJSCREEN does not identify EJ communities, but may help to identify areas in which **elevated pollution burdens** and **vulnerable populations** may be present



# Key Features in EJSCREEN

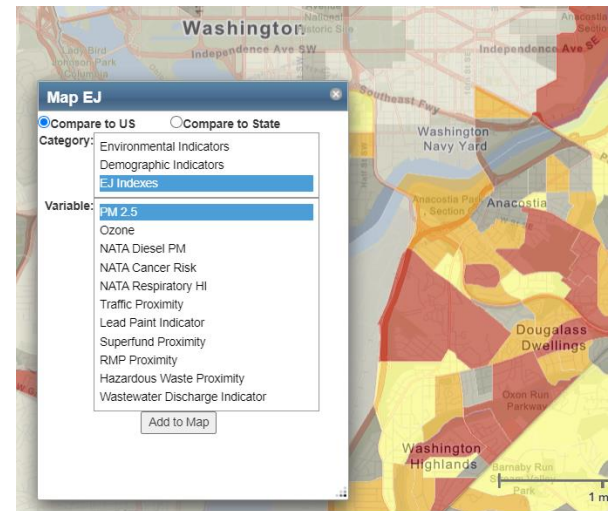
- EJSCREEN enables mapping of **11 different EJ Indexes**
  - EJ Index = Environmental Indicator + Demographics
  - Indicators include hazardous waste, air toxics, etc.
- The system provides data at the block group level
  - Census block groups often contain 600 to 3,000 people
- The tool is available to anyone with Internet access
  - Standard printable reports, maps, and bar graphs
- Users can view data online and/or download data



# Applications of EJSCREEN

EJSCREEN assessments at EPA often involve the following topics:

- Public outreach and engagement
- Enforcement targeting
- Inclusion in inspection reports
- Permitting and NEPA reviews
- Reviews of grant projects
- Other placed-based initiatives

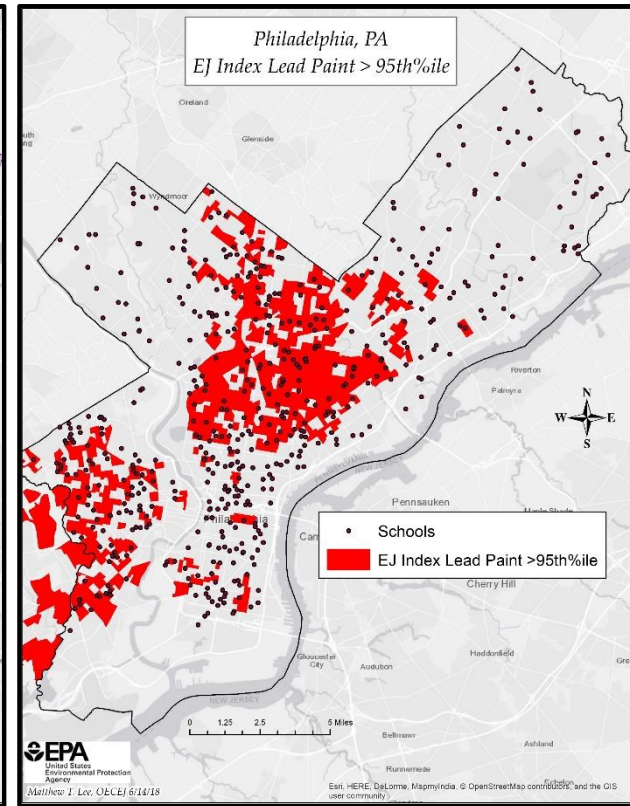
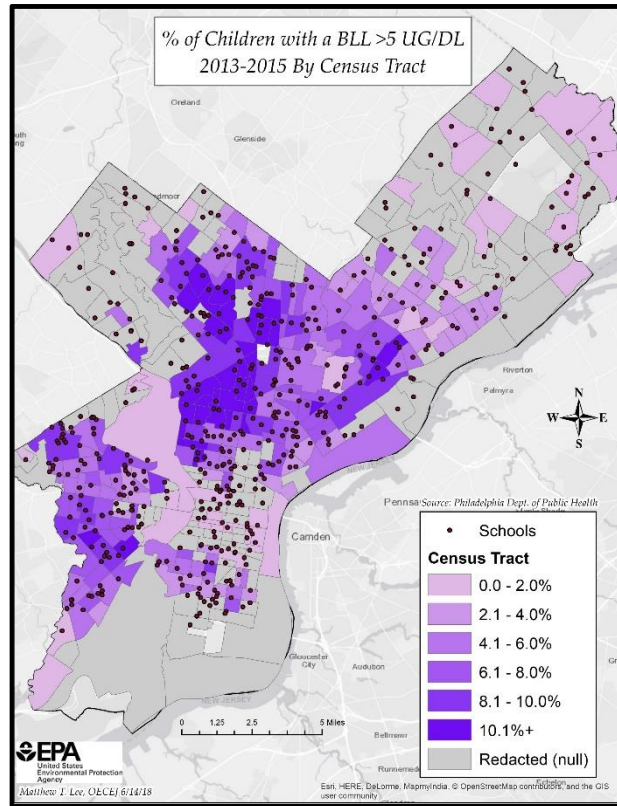
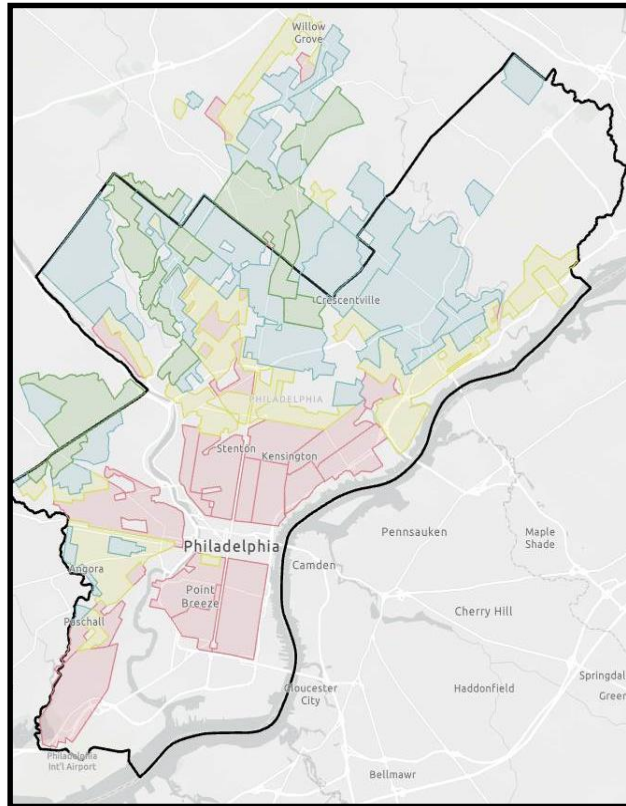




# Library of Congress

# City of Philadelphia

# EJSCREEN



Residential Grading  
(1938)

Child Blood Lead Level  
(2013 – 2015)

Lead Paint Housing  
(2019)



# Recent Funding Opportunities





# The Justice40 Initiative

Justice40 is a government-wide initiative to deliver at least forty percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to disadvantaged communities.

In July 2021, the Office of Management and Budget released Interim Guidance to initiate implementation of this mandate across the federal government.

- Each agency will assess all relevant programs and determine which programs will be part of the J40 initiative.
- OMB has already selected certain agency programs (including six programs at EPA) to participate in a pilot process to immediately begin implementing the J40 mandate on an accelerated timeline.



# Justice40 EPA Pilot Programs

OMB selected the following six EPA programs as pilot programs to maximize benefits from resources that are directed to disadvantaged communities:

- Drinking Water State Revolving Fund
- Clean Water State Revolving Fund
- Brownfields Program
- Superfund Remedial Program
- Diesel Emissions Reductions Act Program
- Reducing Lead in Drinking Water



# Recent Legislation

Federal legislation in 2021 has also expanded EPA's capacity to support and integrate EJ throughout the nation:

- American Rescue Plan Act of 2021
  - ARP provides \$100 million for EPA to address health outcome disparities from pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic, including \$50 million to advance EJ.
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021
  - IIJA includes \$55 billion for clean drinking water and \$21 billion for environmental remediation as well as funding streams for other environmental investments such as power infrastructure; physical and natural system resilience; airports, ports, and waterways; transit systems; and roads, bridges, and major projects.



# Direction from EPA Administrator

“I’ve directed every office within my agency to **prioritize and focus on environmental justice**, whether that be through our regulatory process, our policies, or our enforcement.

...

[T]he resources that we will get from [the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Acts of 2021] as it relates to investing in clean drinking water, as well as looking at the resources that will be remediating legacy pollution, like in our Superfund sites and brownfield sites, will have a **focus on environmental justice and equity** as we deploy these resources.”

- Michael S. Regan, EPA Administrator



# The Future of EJ Grants at EPA

- More of current grant programs with the goal to expand with more awards and larger award amounts:
  - Environmental Justice Small Grants (\$75,000)
  - EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving Cooperative Agreements/CPS (\$200,000)
  - State Environmental Justice Cooperative Agreements/SEJCA (\$200,000)
- Design and implement next level of new funding opportunities (looking for input from the NEJAC):
  - Expanded grant authorities, including Community Based Participatory Research and EJ Training
  - Ideas include opportunities to partner with Tribes, Academia, Philanthropy, Business and Industry
  - Community-based infrastructure improvements
  - Collaborating/coordinating with other grant programs



# Thank You

Office of Communities, Tribes and Environmental Assessment  
Mid-Atlantic Region  
United States Environmental Protection Agency

