



What is happening: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) adopted an Environmental Justice Policy on September 16, 2023, which is open for public comment until November 30, 2023. This policy has implications for the many environmental justice communities in PA that are facing the disproportionate burden of air and water pollution.

What you can do: Email PA DEP urging them to strengthen their policy to protect frontline communities! Environmental justice policies are needed to protect low-income communities, rural communities, and Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. Your voice will make a difference in how environmental justice policies are adopted in local agencies like the PA DEP.

Be sure to send your email to: ecomment@pa.gov

Policy Talking Points:

- DEP must work with the state legislature to create and pass law which will give DEP authority to enforce this policy, which is currently non-binding.
- DEP should recreate the Environmental Justice Advisory Board to give the community meaningful decision-making power in the permitting process.
- DEP should provide budget funding for Community Liaisons and the Environmental Justice Advisory Board members to encourage participation that does not unduly burden community members.
- DEP must strengthen language throughout the Policy to move from discretionary (e.g. use of "may", "should", "could") to compulsory (use instead "will" or "must").
- DEP must add quantitative and qualitative evaluation metrics to the policy's purpose statements to measure progress across these goals, assess what activities are successful in meeting these purposes, and identify areas of growth or guideline revisions that are needed in the future.
- The implementation planning process must include environmental justice leaders and advocates at the table

General Environmental Justice Talking Points:

- Communities living near polluting facilities are majority low-income communities, rural communities, and Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. These communities face the disproportionate burden of air and water pollution.
- Unjust policies have allowed environmental hazards to accumulate in predominantly Black communities and PA DEP has the responsibility to rectify those injustices.
- Everyone must have the same protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment.
- PA environmental justice communities are dealing with lead contamination in water and paint, negative health associated with hydraulic fracturing, coke works plants, petrochemicals, and other fossil fuel projects.