



# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE *Quarterly*

<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice>

Fall 2002

## A Message from the Director

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *the Environmental Justice Quarterly*. With each issue, we hope to bring you timely updates from the environmental justice newsfront.

The Fall 2002 issue also commemorates the 10th anniversary of the Office of Environmental Justice. The articles in this issue offer a glimpse of our many milestones.

As we continue to promote and coordinate the integration of environmental justice into all policies, programs, and activities, we will strive to make each ounce of progress newsworthy.

Remember, we are all sojourners on the road of environmental justice, to ensure the equal enforcement of environmental laws to protect all communities.

Barry E. Hill

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## We Are 10!

*EPA Celebrates the 10th Anniversary of the Office of Environmental Justice*

The year was 1992, and EPA had just issued a report from the Environmental Equity Workgroup. Grassroots organizations were looking for opportunities to engage with the Agency to address the disproportionate and adverse impacts of environmental pollution on some communities around the country. EPA's federal counterparts, as well as state, local, and tribal governments were looking for direction on issues that seemed too complex to define.

By year's end, the Agency had established a new office, the Office of Environmental Equity (later renamed as the Office of Environmental Justice, OEJ). It was a small office with a big mandate.

OEJ's humble and rather obscure beginnings have been eclipsed by its visible presence today, punctuated by several

milestones along the way. Ten years ago, there was no such thing as EJ coordinators, NEJAC, EJ Small Grants, Interagency Working Group and revitalization projects, ECO internships, comprehensive EJ Action Plans, and many other activities which have become synonymous with the Office of Environmental Justice.

To accomplish its many initiatives, OEJ has become adept at leveraging scarce resources. It has made an impact throughout the Agency and beyond. Yet more work lies ahead as the Agency kicks into high gear to implement the Administrator's directive—to integrate environmental justice into all EPA policies, programs and activities.

OEJ has redefined itself and the very notion of environmental justice. Its mission is clear and ongoing: in a nutshell, environmental justice is for all communities.



## IWG Revitalization Projects Draw Nat'l Recognition

The Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (IWG) embarked on the first round of national demonstration projects in 2000. In just two years, these 15 projects have met with significant achievements:

- Established working relationships of more than 150 organizations and 11 federal agencies;
- Secured commitments of more than \$15 million in public and private funding to address issues ranging from children's health to economic revitalization;
- Augmented brownfields redevelopment initiatives to fully meet quality-of-life and

economic development needs in diverse communities;

- Used alternative dispute resolution and consensus building to address cases of conflict or potential conflict; and
- Identified key elements of a systematic model for holistic, integrated, and collaborative problem-solving.

Recognition of these accomplishments have come in many ways. For example, the Ford Foundation recently honored Harold Mitchell with the Leadership for a Changing World award. Mitchell is director of ReGenesis,

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a community-based organization at the heart of the community cleanup and revitalization project in the Arkwright and Forest Park neighborhoods of Spartanburg, South Carolina. Mitchell also received the EPA 2002 National Citizen's Excellence in Community Involvement Award. Upon receiving the Ford Foundation award, Mitchell said, "Our group went through a very in-depth investigation and received positive comments from both friends and foes."

As a result of these projects, a multi-stakeholder collaborative model is emerging to address environmental justice. An EPA report on these projects, *Environmental Justice Collaborative Model: A Framework to Ensure Local Problem-Solving*, is now available ([www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice](http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice)). Also, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) convened a national forum last year called, "Collaborative Models to Achieve Environmental Justice," to examine these projects.

In Fall 2002, the IWG solicited nominations for a second round of demonstration projects, also referred to as "Environmental Justice Revitalization Projects." The goal of this second round is to develop a fully mature, multi-stakeholder collaborative model to address the multiple environmental, health, economic and social concerns of communities suffering from environmental justice.

## EJ101: Basic Training Starts with the Fundamentals

The Fundamentals of Environmental Justice Workshop explores the origins of the Environmental Justice movement, perceptions and definitions of environmental justice, laws pertaining to environmental justice, and provides an overview of Geographic Information Systems ("GIS"), and other analytical tools to help understand, integrate and address environmental justice issues.

The goals of the workshop are simple: to identify and address environmental justice issues. Participants learn to effectively engage in productive dialogue around the issues of environmental justice and promote constructive and collaborative problem-solving techniques. Equally important is the goal to integrate aspects of environmental justice into the participants' work on a daily basis. These training sessions are a means to consistently integrate environmental justice into environmental programs.

The workshop is a product of the Environmental Justice Training Collaborative (EJTC) which began in 1998 when EPA's western regions responded to the growing need for better understanding of environmental justice. In the early stages, members developed a basic curriculum and worked with other partners to identify training needs and plan train-the-trainer events. More than 100 partners including federal, state, academia, tribal, industry, and community groups have formed an electronic listserv to stay connected on training matters.

To date, the workshop has trained over 1,500 people across the country with participants from federal, state and local governments, and grassroots organizations, business and academia. The EJTC received an EPA bronze medal in 2002 for its outstanding work to help integrate environmental justice into the daily operations at EPA and across the country.

## Program Perspective: Office of Air & Radiation (OAR)

Since the early 1990s, OAR programs have contributed to advancements in public health to reduce emissions of criteria pollutants and air toxics; address climate change; require cleaner vehicles and cleaner fuels; and improve indoor air quality to benefit all citizens.

Through interactions with the NEJAC's Air and Water Subcommittee as well as grassroots organizations, OAR has learned the importance of developing more straightforward approaches to dealing with communities on toxics issues.

Also, many communities are concerned about diesel emissions, bus and truck idling, and emissions trading programs. As a result, OAR is working toward addressing the perceptions and concerns of many of these communities.

OAR will continue to make improvements in air quality to ensure continued public health protection. OAR is pursuing initiatives related to reducing diesel-related emissions, enhancing the diesel retrofit program, reducing mercury emissions, reducing emissions from power plants, identifying toxic "hotspots," and developing and supporting voluntary programs to reduce emissions.

Many staff are also involved in the Environmental Justice Training Collaborative to develop training for permit writers, technical assistance for tribal governments, and training for citizens on new source review and Title V permitting.

OAR's ongoing commitment to environmental justice means decreasing the burden of risks to ALL communities by improving air quality. OAR's Environmental Justice Action Plan has five specific goals: (1) improve air quality and protect public health in all communities; (2) familiarize and build awareness of environmental justice issues as they relate to OAR's mission and regulatory authority; (3) ensure that environmental justice is a significant consideration in strategic and operational planning efforts; (4) provide additional tools and guidance for OAR staff working on environmental justice issues; and (5) develop stronger partnerships with environmental justice communities, tribes, state and local agencies, industry, and environmental organizations.



Photo courtesy of OAR  
Research Triangle Park

## Small Grants Give Communities a Big Boost

Each year, hundreds of applicants eagerly await the Environmental Justice Small Grants process. Since 1994, the program has provided financial assistance to community-based/grassroots organizations and tribal governments working on local solutions to local environmental problems.

Funds can be used to develop a new activity or substantially improve the quality of existing programs have a direct impact on affected communities. All awards will be made as grants not to exceed one year.

From a pilot program with a \$500,000 budget and a \$10,000 limit per award, it has grown to \$1.3 million in fiscal year 2002, with awards of \$20,000 each. To date, the program has awarded approximately \$16.4 million to 973 grant recipients. Small Grant projects continue to address an array of environmental and human health issues such as childhood asthma, farm worker pesticide protection, fish consumption, indoor air quality, drinking water contamina-

tion and lead prevention. The types of projects include research, education and outreach. The program has included an added focus in fish consumption, water quality and innovative technologies for pollution prevention.

For additional information, the publication *Emerging Tools for Local Problem Solving, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, highlight more than 100 successful and creative grants working on local solutions and solving local environmental problems.

The Application Guidance for the 2003 Small Grant Program is now available on OEJ's website in English and Spanish. The application period opened October 1 and ends at midnight December 18, 2002. To be eligible, applications must be postmarked by midnight.



### Regional Corner: EPA Region 9

The EPA Region 9 Pacific Southwest Office serves Arizona, California, Nevada, Hawaii, and the Pacific Trust Territories. This region is also home to approximately 139 Indian Tribes. Its key environmental justice goals include the integration of environmental justice at all levels of government, community empowerment through grants, training and education, and State capacity building for environmental justice implementation.

Region 9 carries out its Environmental Justice program through multi-agency focused activities in communities that may bear a disproportionate environmental impact; community outreach and environmental education efforts; grant funds for environmental projects conducted by communities; technical support for, and facilitation of, environmental issues raised by communities; and support for the development of State legislation and State and local agency policies and programs.

Recently, the Regional office participated in lead poison prevention activities in East Palo Alto, California. This outreach effort resulted in increased calls to the county's lead program, surveys at a local health clinic, and free lead testing and outreach to hundreds of children at the Back-To-School Resource Carnival.

Also, the Ma'at Youth Academy in Richmond, California leveraged an EPA's Environmental Justice small grant to obtain seed money from the California Endowment. They secured the technical assistance of two physicians to design a fish consumption survey which was conducted at the Richmond Marina and San Pablo Reservoir. High school students were trained and collected environmental samples. As a result, a public health advisory was issued to caution individuals about the danger of methylmercury in fish caught from the San Francisco Bay.

For more information on Region 9's Environmental Justice Program, contact Rachel Loftin, Team Leader at (415) 972-3795 or <[loftin.rachel@epa.gov](mailto:loftin.rachel@epa.gov)>.

### Do You... ECO?

The Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) has been working with EPA to foster environmental opportunities ever since the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) opened its doors back in 1992. Students receive practical experience working in fields such as science, engineering, law, computer science, political analysis, and more. To date, over \$36 million has been invested in this program called "Furthering Environmental Careers," which has given more than 2,200 students opportunities for on-the-job training and community involvement. By nurturing these students, OEJ also hopes to ingrain the concept of environmental justice in the next generation of environmental professionals.

This program is now ubiquitous in EPA, and just about every office has had an ECO intern. OEJ further maintains its commitment by hiring at least two interns for the immediate office and provides additional funds for three interns to work in each of EPA's 10 Regional offices. To learn more about the program, visit <<http://www.eco.org>>.

The success of the EPA/ECO partnership has spawned another program with a direct benefit to communities. In 2000, OEJ launched its Community Intern Program, allowing students to assist community organizations on environmental issues. In turn, more than 60 students have gained working experience at the grassroots level. OEJ is eager to provide funding for 40 internships in Summer 2003.

In October 2002, EPA was on hand to help ECO celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of environmental leadership at the 2002 Career Fair in Boston, MA. These annual fairs are prime opportunities for recruiting potential ECO associates.

ECO also touts a Diversity Conference each year to engage schools and potential employers in the importance of diversity and encourages minorities to consider careers in environmental fields. This will help ensure a competitive, highly skilled, and diverse workforce in the future.

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## Upcoming NEJAC Meeting on P2

Three years ago the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) shifted the focus of its national meetings on broad public policy issues with the goal of providing effective advice and cogent recommendations to EPA.

Since 1999, the NEJAC has focused on the following issues: the permitting process, community-based health research models, federal agency environmental justice implementation, and fish consumption and water quality standards. According to the Chairperson, Peggy Shepard, "The NEJAC hopes that the preparation and submission of issue focused recommendations will increase the likelihood of positive and timely action by the EPA."

This year is no different as the NEJAC is poised to examine the issue of pollution prevention (P2) in the upcoming meeting in Baltimore, Mary-

land on December 9-12, 2002. The NEJAC will focus on several approaches such as source reduction, waste minimization, sustainable development, and other innovative approaches to systematically reduce, eliminate, and/or prevent pollution.

Delivering salient advice and recommendations to the Agency on any given public policy issue requires the NEJAC's Executive Committee to convene a diverse, multi-stakeholder workgroup devoted to examining a specific policy issue and deliberating with the NEJAC on that issue. At the upcoming meeting, Wilma Subra, Co-Chair of the NEJAC Pollution Prevention Workgroup, says she "would like to establish a program that will result in environmental justice communities living in cleaner environments as a result of full implementation of pollution prevention programs throughout such communities."



NEJAC National Meeting  
December 9-12, 2002

"Pollution Prevention and  
Environmental Justice"

Baltimore Marriott  
Inner Harbor Hotel  
110 South Eutaw Street  
Baltimore, Maryland  
(410) 962-0202

For more information, visit:  
[http://www.epa.gov/compliance/  
environmentaljustice/nejac/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/nejac/index.html)