



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

MAY 30 1995

PEP - Environmental Compliance Memorandum No. ECM95-3

To: Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Willie R. Taylor, Director
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

Subject: National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
Responsibilities Under the Departmental Environmental
Justice Policy

In a memorandum dated August 17, 1994, Secretary Babbitt established an environmental justice policy that requires the Department to consider the impacts of the Department's actions on minority and low-income populations and communities, as well as the equity of the distribution of benefits and risks of those decisions. The memorandum provides that these considerations should be specifically included in the National Environmental Policy Act documentation. The Department's environmental justice policy is based on Executive Order 12898, dated February 11, 1994, which requires agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and policies on minorities and low-income populations and communities. The Executive Order applies equally to Federal agency responsibility for Native American programs.

Therefore, henceforth all environmental documents should specifically analyze and evaluate the impacts of any proposed projects, actions or decisions on minority and low-income populations and communities, as well as the equity of the distribution of the benefits and risks of those decisions.

To comply with the environmental justice policy established by the Secretary, bureaus and offices should identify and evaluate, during the scoping and/or planning processes, any anticipated effects, direct or indirect, from the proposed project, action or decision on minority and low-income populations and communities, including the equity of the distribution of the benefits and risks.

If any significant impacts to minority and low-income populations and communities are identified during the scoping and/or planning processes, the environmental document should clearly evaluate and state the environmental consequences of the proposed project, action or decision on minority and low-income populations and communities in the environmental document.

If a project or an action, however, is expected to have either an insignificant impact or no impact on minority/low-income populations, the document, under the scoping section in an environmental impact statement, should specifically state that the proposed project or action was considered during scoping and/or planning and is expected to have either insignificant impact or no impact, direct or indirect, with reasons given. A similar statement should be included in any environmental assessment under an appropriate section.

Attachment



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

AUG 17 1994

MEMORANDUM

To: Solicitor
All Assistant Secretaries
Inspector General
Heads of All Bureaus and Offices

From: The Secretary *Frederick B. Bennett*

Subject: Environmental Justice Policy

The Department of the Interior will be an active leader in seeking successful strategies to bring about environmental justice. As President Clinton has noted, at times the costs and risks of environmental decisions fall disproportionately on minorities and low income groups and communities. Too often these risks fall upon the children of these communities. I have commenced a series of actions to support Executive Order 12898 of February 11, 1994, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." We are working closely with the Environmental Protection Agency to meet the milestones of the Executive Order for establishing a strategy.

I want you to ensure that Department of the Interior decisions consider the impacts of our actions and inactions on minority and low income populations and communities, as well as the equity of the distribution of benefits and risks of those decisions. This consideration should be specifically included in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation on our decisionmaking. I also want the Department to provide leadership in ways that assure meaningful participation by minority and low income populations in our wide range of activities where health and safety are involved. This interaction with diverse peoples has always been a part of our mission whether in the Pacific islands or the Northern Great Plains. Our emphasis on participation includes both a respect for diverse views and an ethics-based approach to stewardship.

The public health and safety concepts underlying environmental justice challenge and enlarge the nature of stewardship undertaken by Interior. This concept focuses both upon our responsibility to the community and to our employees. Environmental justice activism now creates new questions on the ability to solve health/resource related conflicts, on the weight and methods of community participation, the relationship with groups that have little or no history with traditional land or resource managers, and the effectiveness of current decision

development or negotiation processes. Many of our current organizations and efforts to involve the public in our processes may serve as national models for action. I ask each of you to use your creativity and talents at problem solving to identify and then address those diverse issues in our daily work.

I have appointed Anne Shields, Deputy Solicitor, and Faith Roessel, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, to co-chair the Department's environmental justice activities. Please give them your support and assistance when they ask for your help.