



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN



DECEMBER 2025



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DEP SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Shawn M. LaTourette, Commissioner
Megan Brunatti, Chief of Staff
Katrina (Kati) Angarone, Deputy Commissioner
Kimberly Cahall, Chief Advisor & Chief Enforcement Officer
Paul Baldauf, Assistant Commissioner | Air, Energy & Materials Sustainability
John Cecil, Assistant Commissioner | State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites
Elizabeth Dragon, Assistant Commissioner | Community Investment & Economic Revitalization
Pat Gardner, Assistant Commissioner | Water Resources Management
Dave Golden, Assistant Commissioner | Fish & Wildlife
David E. Haymes, Assistant Commissioner | Contaminated Site Remediation & Redevelopment
Adrienne Kreipke, Chief Financial & Operations Officer
Jennifer Moriarty, Assistant Commissioner | Watershed & Land Management
Nicholas Angarone, Chief Resilience Officer

DEP OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

PRIMARY AUTHORS AND EDITORS:

Kandyce Perry, Director
Myla Ramirez, Manager
Nadia Akbar, Coordinator
Rehanna Azimi, Community Relations Specialist
Anna Maria O'Connor, Coordinator

DESIGN AND LAYOUT:

Rehanna Azimi, Community Relations Specialist
Christina Gonzalve, Coordinator
Chloe Landau, Coordinator

Special thanks to the following DEP staff who coordinated environmental justice questionnaire responses on behalf of their programs and/or otherwise provided a specific contribution to this Plan:

Nathaly Agosto-Filion, Office of Climate Resilience
Armando Alfonso, Office of Enforcement Policy
Bryana DeVeaux, Office of Legislative Affairs
Vincent Caliguire, Community Investment & Economic Revitalization
Jennifer Feltis, Water Resources Management
Mandy Futey, Office of Communications & Outreach
Peg Hanna, Air, Energy & Materials Sustainability
Edressa Kamal, Office of Legal Affairs
Debra LaQuaglia, Office of Communications & Outreach
Stacey MacEwan, Office of Natural Resources Restoration
Robin Madden, State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites
David Pepe, Office of Permit & Project Navigation
Sana Qureshi, Contaminated Site Remediation & Redevelopment
Kenneth Ratzman, Air, Energy & Materials Sustainability
Michael Russel, Office of Economic Analysis & Development
Christine Schell, Office of Environmental & Public Health Analysis
Kristi Tallone, Watershed & Land Management
Abbie Tang-Smith, Community Investment & Economic Revitalization
Peter Tenebruso, Division of Information Technology
Richelle Wormley, Air, Energy & Materials Sustainability

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LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER AND EJ DIRECTOR

Dear Fellow New Jerseyans,

Every resident of our State—regardless of income, race, ethnicity, color or national origin—has a right to live, work and recreate in a clean and healthy environment. Unfortunately, low-income communities and communities of color in New Jersey have historically faced a disproportionately high number of environmental and public health stressors that reduce quality of life and create greater risk of adverse health effects. At the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), where our mission is to improve and protect the public health and the environment, we know that the benefits of environmental protection have not always been broadly or equally shared by all of our Garden State neighbors. This Environmental Justice Action Plan charts the course for near- and long-term improvements to DEP programs and services all aimed at furthering the promise of environmental justice for all.



Developed in accordance with Executive Order 23, which required executive branch agencies to integrate environmental justice considerations into their policies and programs, this EJ Action Plan reflects an honest self-assessment of DEP's strengths, challenges, and opportunities to further institutionalize environmental justice as a facet of each DEP function and workstream. Every DEP program participated in this process, asking hard questions about how we engage communities, allocate resources, deliver environmental benefits, and reduce disparities.

DEP programs examined how their core functions – whether reducing pollution, managing natural resources, or investing in environmental improvements – can be adapted to deliver more equitable outcomes for New Jersey's overburdened communities. We used that assessment to develop goals and actions to help us continue to make tangible progress in better serving New Jersey's most vulnerable communities.

This EJ Action Plan complements New Jersey's historic Environmental Justice Law, which requires certain pollution-generating facilities to assess and avoid causing or contributing to disproportionate impacts upon overburdened communities. This plan turns the lens inward, ensuring that environmental justice principles guide all DEP policies, resource allocations, and engagement strategies. Together, these efforts bring us closer to a more comprehensive approach to addressing environmental inequities and improving quality of life for the people and communities who too often bare the greatest environmental burdens.

To be clear, this is not easy work. It requires those in government to step beyond our comfort zones, confront systemic inequities, and build trust both within our agency and with the communities we serve. But it is necessary work. By aligning our programs under a shared vision for furthering the promise of environmental justice, we can standardize best practices, close gaps, and create measurable improvements in environmental and public health outcomes for all of our neighbors.

This EJ Action Plan is a starting point, not an endpoint. It lays out a framework for progress, which will require continued collaboration, transparency, and accountability. We shall rely upon the dedicated DEP public servants who helped develop this vision to work to ensure its thoughtful implementation, and upon our partners, stakeholders, and the public for continued engagement and support.

Together, we are charting a new course for the future, with a cleaner, healthier, and more just environment at its center.

Onward, with hope,

Shawn M. LaTourette
Commissioner

Kandyce Perry
Director, Office of Environmental Justice



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Above photo: DEP staff and local indigenous leaders tour a park along the Cohansey (Cohanzick) River prior to the Cumberland County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in September 2022.

This report is the first Environmental Justice Action Plan for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. It is intended to serve as a roadmap for a more equitable and just set of services and initiatives to better serve overburdened communities across New Jersey. Its strategies for supporting environmental quality throughout the state outlines roles for DEP’s many programs to work together towards furthering the promise of environmental justice. These strategies build on the strength of the State’s history of strong statutes, regulations, and policies to improve and protect our air, land, water, and natural and historic resources. The strategies here connect a wide variety of initiatives to be implemented across the Department, and in collaboration with stakeholders, community groups, and other government entities. This EJ Action Plan addresses current concerns, such as the challenges of living and working in communities that bear disproportionate environmental burdens and lack of environmental benefits. At the same time, the EJ Action Plan highlights opportunities to support the agency’s mission of protecting the environment over the next decade, and especially in the immediate future.

Through an initial assessment process of listening and visioning, the Office of Environmental Justice has engaged with DEP professionals across the multitude of DEP programs to reflect on their important work, and to identify where environmental justice challenges can be turned into opportunities. From assessing the Department’s work to creating a robust list of goals and actions, this Plan aims to bring together the ideas and vision of staff and leadership across DEP to better serve people and communities across New Jersey.

This Plan is intended to be a living document that can evolve alongside community needs and agency goals, and that at all times seeks to integrate environmental justice considerations into all Department functions and workstreams. It is only by thinking deeply about how we perform and consistently improve upon the work of public health, safety, and environmental protection that we can further the promise of environmental justice—for all.





Above photo: DEP Staff and staff from the City of Perth Amboy visit the site of a future waterfront park prior to the Middlesex County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in June 2023.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN GOALS



ENGAGE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

The Environmental Justice Action Plan highlights how the Department can improve

its outreach to, and engagement with, New Jersey’s overburdened communities.

Engaging with the people and communities of New Jersey helps the Department to more effectively achieve its goals. Listening to public testimony about environmental concerns, seeking input on policy decisions, and partnering with stakeholders to co-design solutions allows the Department to achieve its mission completely. However, this level of public participation is only realized when the DEP communicates effectively about its work, educates the public about issues, and conducts inclusive outreach.

Communication, education, and outreach are integral to the work of all DEP programs to ensure NJ residents have the information to understand environmental risks, access natural amenities, and participate in decisions that impact their health and environment.



ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The Environmental Justice Action Plan outlines ways

the Department’s core functions can best be administered to ensure quality environments in New Jersey’s overburdened communities.

The Department monitors environmental media, establishes rulemaking processes, issues permits, inspects facilities, enforces requirements, and



maintains a robust emergency management and response system. These key functions work as a system that enables DEP to improve and protect New Jersey’s environment. Most DEP offices are involved with at least one of these processes.

Ensuring that New Jersey residents have clean air, water, and land is a core mission of the Department. The DEP will enhance air, water, soil, and habitat monitoring networks to better understand environmental conditions in OBCs. The DEP will identify opportunities to further integrate EJ considerations in permitting processes, reduce disproportionate environmental incidents in OBCs through enforcement strategies, and undertake more projects to deliver environmental benefits in OBCs, including through its compliance engagements with regulated entities and the deployment of resources recovered from parties responsible for environmental harms.



INVEST IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Environmental Justice Action Plan recognizes the fundamental role that financial investments play in improving the environment for all and prioritizing benefits for overburdened communities.

Whether improving water infrastructure, deploying clean technologies, or expanding access to quality open and recreational spaces, DEP invests state and federal funding to improve and protect public health, safety, and the environment. In addition to direct spending, DEP provides numerous streams of funding to local governments and nonprofit organizations via grants and loans. Each DEP program area disburses and provides funding and technical assistance to applicants.

DEP aims to align and prioritize investments and other various financial resources to the OBCs most affected by environmental and public health stressors, and who experience a lack of environmental and public health benefits.

The Department will expand opportunities for investment in environmental improvements in OBCs, measure investments in OBCs to advance and expand impact, and financially support OBCs to manage and recover from environmental emergencies and emerging public health challenges.



EXPAND AND IMPROVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Environmental Justice Action Plan focuses on providing overburdened communities with meaningful access to the state’s many natural and historic benefits.

From the eastern shores to the forested mountains of the state, New Jersey holds natural and historic resources to be enjoyed by all of the state’s residents and visitors. In addition to being disproportionately impacted by pollution, OBCs can often lack access to the state’s natural resources disproportionately. Examples include a disproportionate lack of adequate tree canopy, making many dense OBCs significantly hotter in the summer. This lack also limits opportunities for recreation and relaxation, leading to limited physical and mental well-being.

Environmental justice requires that overburdened communities are provided with meaningful access to these environmental benefits.

DEP will expand access to nature in OBCs, improve equitable user experience, incorporate cultural significance and inclusivity in recreational and educational spaces. The Department will work to deploy creative communication and engagement tailored for OBCs and address historic natural resource accessibility gaps.



STUDY, PLAN, AND MAKE POLICY

The Environmental Justice Action Plan seeks to ensure that DEP makes equitable policy decisions that are protective of human health, safety, and the environment.

Research and planning is conducted by every program across the agency. Research, data collection, planning, and policy development are critical tools for ensuring that DEP actions improve and protect public health, safety, and the environment. The agency plans for the success of the state's health and environment by analyzing current and future threats and creating plans to mitigate said threats. DEP also makes multiple planning and data tools and resources available to the public so that community scientists, advocates, and lay people can use it for their own research.

DEP will institutionalize data transparency, accessibility, and EJ inclusive research priorities, ensure equity in planning processes, and build EJ into all policies and procedures.

Below photo: OEJ staff set up an interpretation station to provide language access to attendees at the Bergen County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in February 2023.



INTRODUCTION





Above photo: Governor Murphy signs New Jersey's Environmental Justice Law in September 2020 with several EJ advocates.

INTRODUCTION

All New Jerseyans deserve to live, work, learn, and recreate in a clean and healthy environment. Yet, approximately 85% of the state's communities defined by NJ's [Environmental Justice Law](#) as minority, low-income, or having limited English proficiency—known as [overburdened communities](#) (OBCs)—experience disproportionate environmental and public health stressors and less environmental benefits in comparison to the stressors and benefits experienced by the non-overburdened communities in the state or the OBC's county. More than half of the state's municipalities contain overburdened communities. Further, overburdened communities often experience higher levels of health and economic disparities, which exacerbate the negative effects of environmental stressors.

These disproportionate impacts are often a result of systemic injustice. No one decision has contributed to this unfortunate legacy; rather, these inequalities are the result of many policies, structures, and systems, including those in government. It is the responsibility of the State of New Jersey to eradicate patterns of pervasive environmental discrimination of, and harm to, the state's most vulnerable populations. This responsibility is clearly outlined in [Executive Order No. 23](#) (EO 23), which articulates the State government's policy of ensuring that "all New Jersey residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, or income, receive equal protection under the laws of this State, are able to live and work in a healthy and clean environment."

EO 23 directs the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to "take the lead in developing guidance for all Executive branch departments and agencies for the consideration of Environmental Justice in implementing their statutory and regulatory responsibilities." To that end, DEP published [Furthering the Promise: A Guidance Document for Advancing Environmental Justice Across State Government](#) in October 2020. The guidance document presents a framework for executive branch departments and agencies to apply the principles of environmental justice to their operations, participate in an Environmental Justice Interagency Council, conduct environmental justice assessments, and create action plans to improve the agencies' effects on environmental justice communities.

This EJ Action Plan draws on the findings from DEP's environmental justice initial assessment to present an actionable agenda for DEP to further the promise of EJ for NJ's overburdened communities. The EJ Action Plan is an analysis that identifies challenges, and opportunities toward the integration of EJ into the agency.

ABOUT DEP

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) mission is to improve and protect New Jersey's public health, safety, and the environment by managing the state's natural resources and addressing issues related to pollution. DEP was established on April 22, 1970 – America's first official Earth Day. Today, DEP employees in dozens of programs continue to advance innovative strategies to safeguard and enhance New Jersey's air, water and land, and the health of its residents.

DEP achieves this mission in five primary ways:



Engaging the people and communities we serve through communications, outreach, education, and training.



Ensuring environmental quality through monitoring to assess the health of the state's environment and natural resources, adopting rules and issuing permits to protect and improve the state's environment and natural resources, inspecting regulated entities responsible for following the state's rules and permit requirements, enforcing those requirements, and responding to environmental emergencies and remediating contaminated sites.



Investing in environmental improvements by directly deploying projects and providing funding to stakeholders to implement projects



Managing and promoting accessibility of natural and cultural resources by stewarding parks, forests, and fish and wildlife habitats.



Studying the science, planning for the future, and developing standards, policies, and regulations.



DEP PROGRAMMATIC STRUCTURE

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is organized into several major programs, each with distinct responsibilities. At the time of this Plan's development, this includes seven programs reporting to assistant commissioners and multiple offices reporting to the commissioner, chief of staff, deputy commissioner, and chief advisor. For a detailed overview of all the units within DEP's programs, see the appendix.

The Commissioner's Office's sets high-level policy priorities and coordinates decision-making across the agency. It includes programs that manage financial operations, information technology, and human resources and advance climate resilience and environmental justice. The **Chief of Staff** oversees programs that provide scientific support, manage communications, handle emergencies, and coordinate permitting for complex projects. The **Deputy Commissioner** oversees offices that facilitate legislative affairs and address public health and environmental safety issues. The **Chief Advisor's** unit supports legal, regulatory, and enforcement policies, manages real estate transactions, and offers alternative dispute resolution services. **The Chief Resilience Officer** provides and coordinates uniform and comprehensive planning and technical support to communities to increase New Jersey's resilience to climate change.

Air, Energy & Materials Sustainability (AEMS) improves and protects human health, safety, and the environment from all air contaminants, including those that cause climate change, to protect the public from unnecessary radiation exposure, and to manage and regulate solid waste.

Community Investment & Economic Revitalization (CIER) promotes, demonstrates and coordinates the intersection of economic, social, and environmental systems within New Jersey communities, to facilitate environmental improvement and responsible and resilient economic growth while improving the quality of life for our NJ communities.

Contaminated Site Remediation & Redevelopment (CSSR) reduces the number of contaminated sites in New Jersey to ensure and improve the protection of public health, safety, and the environment and ready sites for redevelopment. The CSRR Program also implements response actions at contaminated sites where the part responsible for the contamination is unknown, unwilling, or unable to perform the necessary actions.

Fish & Wildlife improves, protects, and manages the State's fish and wildlife to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic values for all New Jerseyans.

State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites (SPFHS) provides equitable and responsible access for present and conservation of New Jersey's natural, historic and recreational resources.

Water Resources Management (WRM) improves and protects public health by implementing laws and regulations to safeguard water resources.

Watershed and Land Management (WLM) preserves and improves New Jersey's water and land-based natural resources while mitigating environmental threats.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AT DEP

Environmental Justice first became an individual point of focus at DEP in 1998, under the leadership of former Commissioner Robert Shinn who created an Environmental Equity Task Force, later to be known as the Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC), which was comprised largely of representatives from DEP and environmental justice advocates. The two overriding mandates to the Task Force at the time were: (1) to create a state EJ policy and (2) to develop a new pollution permit process which would address EJ concerns and allow for earlier and expanded public participation in the permit process. The EJ policy was adopted in February 2000 through an Administrative Order issued by Commissioner Shinn. The new permit process was developed as a new regulation/rule in 2002 and entitled the “Expanded Community Participation Process for Environmental Equity. However, because the formula to determine environmental injustice was not user-friendly and it would require another rule to fix it, Commissioner Campbell withdrew the rule in May 2002 and began work on new EJ initiatives. Over time, the program was formalized, expanded, and supported by a series of executive orders, which formalized the Office of Environmental Justice and the EJAC. Read more about the [history of environmental justice at DEP](#).

Many years later, and thanks to the tireless work of environmental justice advocates, the New Jersey Legislature and Governor Murphy passed New Jersey’s

groundbreaking [Environmental Justice Law](#), N.J.S.A. 13:1D-157, (Law) in September 2020, which requires DEP to evaluate the contributions of certain facilities to existing environmental and public health stressors in overburdened communities when reviewing certain permit applications. The Law directs DEP to develop [regulations](#) (N.J.A.C 7:1C) to implement the Law, which were adopted on April 17, 2023.

The EJ Law and Rule grant DEP the authority to prevent further harm to overburdened communities when new applicable potentially polluting facilities are proposed, or existing applicable facilities are seeking a permit renewal. However, the EJ Rule is not the only opportunity through which DEP can achieve justice. Governor Murphy’s [Executive Order No. 23](#) (EO 23) laid out a vision for DEP to take the lead in systematically integrating environmental justice into the work of all state executive branch agencies.

The implementation of DEP’s environmental justice vision is led by its Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), which aims to improve the quality of life in New Jersey’s most vulnerable communities by educating and empowering communities who are often outside of government decision-making processes and guiding DEP’s programs and other state departments and agencies in implementing environmental justice.

Below photo: OEJ staff engage community members in an activity during an Earth Day event at Liberty State Park in 2025.



METHODOLOGY

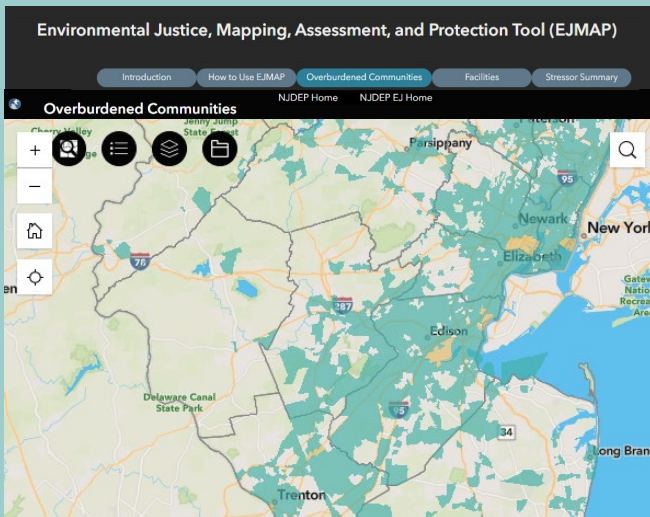
The development of DEP’s Environmental Justice Action Plan commenced with a process of listening to DEP’s programs to understand current strategies that encompass the principles of environmental justice, as well as identifying gaps, challenges and opportunities for intervention. That feedback was developed into an actionable vision for the Department, highlighting current strategies that should be continued and replicated, and distilling opportunities for intervention into categories of goals and actions.

To conduct DEP’s environmental justice initial assessment, OEJ developed a questionnaire for each DEP Program to evaluate their current workstreams and envision better environmental justice outcomes through a five-step process:

STEP 1

KNOW OUR COMMUNITIES

Programs were asked to familiarize themselves with the [EJ Mapping Assessment and Protection \(EJMAP\)](#) tool to better understand the location of and impacts on the overburdened communities we serve.



STEP 2

START BROAD: IMAGINE JUSTICE AS A GOAL OF PROGRAM CORE MISSIONS.

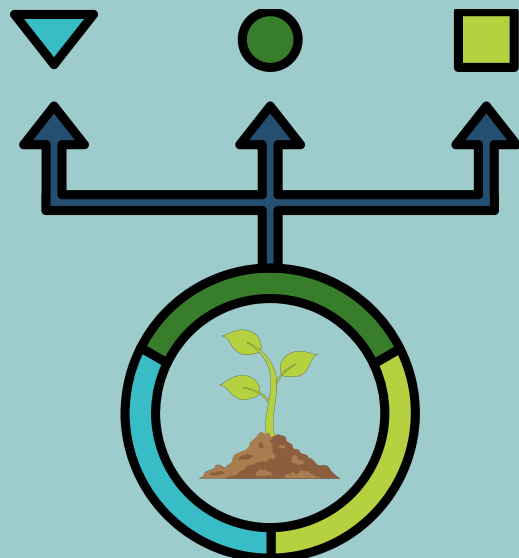
From a broad perspective, programs were asked to evaluate their core mission and how goals can be refined to promote more just outcomes.

STEP 3

DIVE DEEPER: REIMAGINE PROGRAM FUNCTIONS TO PROMOTE MORE JUST OUTCOMES.

To promote more just outcomes, programs were asked to closely examine their primary functions to identify opportunities to increase participation, reduce environmental and public health stressors, and increase environmental and public health benefits. Steps included:

- Defining primary functions and associated tasks.
- Adapting tasks to include or enhance equity and justice.
- Analyzing potential changes in outcomes.





STEP 4

RECONSIDER HOW YOU ALLOCATE FUNDS

How we allocate resources reflects our values and priorities.

Identify sources of funding (i.e., grants, loans) that your program oversees or administers and consider how funding could be reallocated to achieve more just outcomes.



STEP 5

IDENTIFY TRAINING

Educating ourselves and one another with respect to issues of diversity, inclusion, bias, and social and environmental justice can and does influence how we view our work and the communities we serve. Programs were asked to identify any trainings, workshops, or seminars in which your Program has participated.



After reviewing the questionnaire responses, OEJ developed a list of the most regularly performed functions across DEP, which are the categories of work that help DEP advance our mission and meet our goals:

- **Communications, Outreach, Education**
- **Emergency Management**
- **Funding**
- **Inspections & Enforcement**
- **Monitoring**
- **Permitting**
- **Planning**
- **Rulemaking**
- **Science, Research, Data Management**

OEJ then met with each program to discuss its work and functions in more detail, focusing on best practices that could be continued and replicated, challenges that impeded equitable services and outcomes for OBCs, and areas of opportunities for the agency to close gaps in advancing environmental justice. The takeaways from the discussions and questionnaire responses were developed into overarching goals and actions for the agency's key functions, summarized into the five key environmental justice priorities for the agency:

1. **Engage People & Communities**
2. **Ensure Environmental Quality**
3. **Invest in Environmental Improvements**
4. **Manage Accessible Natural Resources**
5. **Study, Plan, and Make Policy**

Each chapter lists a table that summarizes goals and actions. Each action is assigned a timeframe and a Team. Timeframes offer a semblance for how long the action might take to complete from the date of this EJ Action Plan—short-term actions can take 1-2 years, medium-term actions can take 2-4 years, and long-term actions can take 4 or more years, while other actions are ongoing in nature. A DEP Team is the lead entity responsible for implementing the action. The Team can be multiple DEP units or the action can apply to the entire agency.

NEXT STEPS

This EJ Action Plan is presented as the overarching vision and framework for DEP to take an intentional approach to systematically integrating environmental justice into all its works. The agency's multiple programs will have to further envision how to operationalize these goals and actions into their workplans to improve environmental and public health outcomes for the state's most vulnerable and environmentally stressed communities. The Office of Environmental Justice will continue to be a resource for assisting programs in this process and coordinating agency-wide implementation. The current structure for environmental justice coordination for DEP's programs and initiatives – through the programs' EJ liaisons and OEJ staff with consultation from EJAC – can be adapted to facilitate implementation of the DEP EJ Action Plan.

An agency-wide working group, comprising current and additional EJ liaisons, can help coordinate implementation through regular discussions and the sharing of challenges and lessons learned. Such a working group can also help develop measures and indicators to chart progress toward advancing the goals laid out in this plan and refine and develop future goals and actions.

DEP also recommends this assessment and action plan development process to other New Jersey executive branch departments and agencies as a template for developing their own environmental justice assessments and action plans.

DEP also recommends this initial assessment and action plan development process to other New Jersey executive branch departments and agencies as a template for developing their own environmental justice assessments and action plans.



**PRIORITY 1: ENGAGE PEOPLE
AND COMMUNITIES**



PRIORITY 1 ENGAGE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES



Engaging with the people and communities of New Jersey helps the Department to more effectively achieve its goals. Listening to public testimony about environmental concerns, seeking input on policy decisions, and partnering with stakeholders to co-design solutions allows the Department to achieve its mission completely. However, this level of public participation is only realized when DEP communicates effectively about its work, educates the public about issues, and conducts inclusive outreach.

Communication, education, and outreach are integral to the work of all DEP programs to ensure NJ residents have the information to understand environmental risks, access natural amenities, and participate in decisions that impact their health and environment. Key activities are listed to the right.

The implementation of communications and outreach functions in the Department has been managed at two tiers: the first within the Commissioner's Office via the Office of Communications and Outreach and the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) and the second being the communications coordinators housed within program areas across the Department. The Office of Communications and Outreach convenes with program points of contact to advise on discrete projects as needed. OEJ serves as the primary point of contact with OBCs for the agency and consults on program-led EJ communications, outreach, and education activities.

Clear Communications: Crafting compelling, easy to understand, multilingual messages for the public in print and digital

Public Relations and Social Media: Working with media organizations and online platforms to engage wider audiences

Data and Information Accessibility: Developing and maintaining user-friendly tools and websites for transparent data consumption

Meaningful Public Participation: Inviting stakeholders, including regulated entities, nonprofits and community-based organizations, residents, and elected and appointed officials to share ideas, concerns, questions, and general input on various topics in ways that influence final decisions

Popular Education: Developing educational material, trainings, and workshops that allow the public to easily understand DEP initiatives, programs, and processes

SUMMARY OF GOALS AND ACTIONS

GOAL 1.1	Remove Barriers to Accessing and Following information to Increase Participation	TEAM: DEP, OEP, DOIT
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
1.1.1	Improve design, user experience, and accessibility of DEP websites and online tools	S
1.1.2	Promote accessibility of regulated facility compliance and enforcement information	M O
1.1.3	Create automatic email and text communications to notify OBCs of participation opportunities	M O
GOAL 1.2	Demystify Complex Information	TEAM: DEP
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
1.2.1	Create educational materials on agency jurisdiction, environmental policies, and issues of concern	S O
1.2.2	Use a wide variety of different media tools and strategies to create educational content on topics relevant to OBCs	M O
GOAL 1.3	Improve Multi-lingual Language Access	TEAM: DEP, OLA, OEJ
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
1.3.1	Create and adopt program-specific Language Access Plans	S O
1.3.2	Identify vital public documents for standardized translation in accordance with NJ Language Access Law	M O
1.3.3	Focus outreach and engagement events on hard-to-reach, non-English speaking communities	M
1.3.4	Create guidance and standardized process for holding multilingual meetings	M
GOAL 1.4	Build Community Participation with DEP and Increase DEP Participation with Community	TEAM: DEP, CCI
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
1.4.1	Increase opportunities for meaningful public engagement in DEP decision-making processes	S O
1.4.2	Create a framework for equitable compensation for community-based research with OBCs	M O
1.4.3	Build community engagement into each DEP program's mission and strategies	M
1.4.4	Expand CCI communities	M
GOAL 1.5	Expand Outreach and Communications in Real-time on Environmental Incidents and Emergencies	TEAM: COS, OEM, OEJ
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
1.5.1	Establish a community-focused process for information dissemination during major incidents and emergencies	S
1.5.2	Create a platform to alert OBCs, especially CSO communities, on real-time reporting of environmental emergencies	M

TIME FRAME
Short-term S
Medium-term M
Long-term L
Ongoing O



Above photo: DEP staff and members of the South Ward Environmental Justice Alliance tour the Newark Port Terminal prior to the Essex County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in April 2024.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

It is important not to lose sight of the best practices in which the Department is already delivering justice as we engage the people and communities we serve across New Jersey. These best practices are strengths that will continue and can be replicated across applicable areas of the Department.



EJ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

In Fall 2021, DEP relaunched a series of environmental justice community engagement sessions. These town-hall style sessions bring the DEP Commissioner, the OEJ Director, and DEP professionals from across the agency, to overburdened communities around the state to listen to their environmental justice questions and concerns. With a focus on outreach to OBCs with whom the Department does not currently have deep connections, this effort is also designed to help build new relationships.

EJ COMMUNITY TRAINING SERIES

OEJ launched an Environmental Justice Seminar Series called “Navigating the DEP System” in 2024 to educate residents in overburdened communities on DEP’s policies, processes, programs, funding opportunities, and online tools. The goal of the series is to increase the capacity of advocates and residents in OBCs to better advocate for their communities by being informed participants when partaking in DEP’s various participation opportunities. The engagement sessions focus on topics suggested to OEJ by EJAC members and advocates and promote accessible engagement by offering virtual participation and non-English language interpretation options.



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DIRECTORY

In 2024, OEJ published a public [directory](#) of EJ advocates and overburdened community members available for anyone to access. This directory helps anyone doing outreach to more easily identify residents who are interested in environmental justice issues across the state and provide consent for their contact information to be listed. Government agencies, municipalities and counties, academic institutions, nonprofits, regulated facilities, DEP programs, and others may utilize the directory to contact advocates and residents of OBCs about public participation opportunities. Directory members are encouraged to spread the word about opportunities to their neighbors once they are contacted.

DATA TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESSIBILITY

DEP has developed multiple applications and tools to make data collected by the Department accessible in user-friendly formats. These include the [DEP DataMiner](#) application for accessing environmental reports on regulated entities and sites, the [EJ Mapping tool](#), the [Potential Lead Exposure Mapping \(PLEM\)](#) project in collaboration with the Department of Health (DOH), [CSSR's Community Corner](#), and AEMS' ["What's in My Community"](#) mapping application. The "What's in My Community" application, for example, was developed in response to requests by, and in consultation with, the Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC). The map shows every facility with an air permit registered with the Division of Air Quality at DEP, along with current or pending permits and DataMiner reports showing actual facility emissions. Due to the wide extent of environmental data housed in DEP programs, there are additional opportunities to make data accessible and ensure that residents are aware of these tools and how to use them. Also, DEP offers multilingual support via an over-the-phone interpreter service available for the WARN-DEP hotline where the public can report potential environmental hazards.

FACILITATOR CORPS TRAINING

DEP requires public participation for many functions including rulemaking, permitting, and planning. Planning and managing these meetings include challenges such as navigating differing group values and communication styles, managing large numbers of participants, ensuring that communities can understand often overwhelming and inaccessible technical information, and fostering discussions that involve sensitive and polarizing topics. To better address the need for improving staff skills in planning and facilitating all kinds of meetings, DEP hired a consultant in 2024 to provide facilitation training to thirty staff across the agency. This equipped them to meet the goals of the Department's public participation processes. The corps of facilitators were trained on how to create an effective agenda, conduct robust outreach, and navigate challenging conversations. This cohort not only uses these skills to support their program's work, but they can be requested by other staff across the agency who need additional help or a neutral third-party staff person to facilitate and advise them on meeting planning. A facilitator manual was developed as an ongoing resource for the Corps and for future DEP staff that may be in facilitation roles. The resulting improvement in effective engagement and outreach allows the agency to better include voices from New Jersey's many overburdened communities.





GOALS, CHALLENGES, AND ACTIONS

Drawing on the challenges and opportunities revealed through the EJ assessment process, the following goals and actions aim to advance environmental justice as the Department engages the people and communities we serve.

GOAL 1.1 REMOVE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING AND FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION

DEP websites contain a plethora of vital information. From air and water quality data to understanding what regulations a neighboring facility must comply with to knowing when a public comment opportunity opens, all this information is shared by DEP in some fashion. However, users of all kind, including even environmental justice organizers, often find it difficult to locate important information on DEP's websites which becomes a barrier to their ability to stay aware of and participate in engagement opportunities. Without the direct support of DEP staff helping community members find information, many OBCs are not able to take advantage of the vast information available to them.

While direct outreach to communities by DEP staff is an important part of improving information accessibility, a more sustainable approach is to make DEP's information self-sufficient. Creating simpler webpages and better designed and tools with more guides and tutorials will improve accessibility for all.

Improving ease of navigation and clarifying content on program websites will improve accessibility. Each program can work to review their web presence and online tools to ensure that the information presented is easy to find, understand, and is regularly updated. Ensuring user accessibility can also include identifying barriers for users across the disability spectrum. Working with professional consultants, the state's Office of Innovation, and community members can

support this. The state Office of Innovation can not only support DEP in improving its websites but can consult on the agency's online tools.

A particular area of interest for many environmental justice advocates is access to information about neighboring facilities that are often sources for the disproportionate levels of pollution that some OBCs bear. This information includes basics about the company including location and operations, current and pending permits, compliance history, and the status of enforcement actions. DEP has several online tools that community members can use to find and access information about regulated facilities, including EJMAP, DocMiner, and What's in My Community.

Existing and newly launched tools should include a complete marketing campaign, in addition to tutorials and fact sheets, to promote their use. Talk about promoting our existing tools that display enforcement history. Programs that manage and update these tools can collaborate with OEJ to plan an educational seminar for community members.

One example of a tool that could use promotion is the newly launched DocMiner, which provides greater access to public records and complements digitized records found through DEP's existing DataMiner online database. Learning how to best use this self-service tool, to easily access publicly available documents such as site remediation records and air, water, and land use permit records can increase trust between DEP and OBCs. Not only is it helpful to learn how to use these tools, but to understand how they work with DEP data, and if there is integration with other mapping tools, as is also the case with DocMiner.

Once a community member finds and learns how to use a tool, staying up to date on key issues of interest can be a challenge. Solutions for this include additional promotion and training for these tools and an automated notifications system. An automated notifications system can allow interested individuals to receive automated email and text notifications with updates on projects of their choice. One example is to create a platform to notify the public about facilities that are subject to the Environmental Justice Rule. Automated email and text notifications can include direct links to environmental justice impact statements public notices, responses to comments,

and final decisions. After a specific platform is built for EJ Rule notifications, the notification system can be expanded beyond the EJ Rule to include more applications in the future, like notifications for other permit participation opportunities or when a grant application period opens, for example. Providing automated email or text updates will make it easier to follow issues of interest or concern.

GOAL 1.2: DEMYSTIFY COMPLEX INFORMATION

To communicate environmental risks and policy options, DEP often needs to reference complex technical or procedural information. This must be communicated in simple and accessible terms so that every person, and especially residents in OBCs who often have limited capacity, can access and understand vital information that applies to their community. Comprehension of relevant data and information is necessary for the public to directly protect their health. Comprehension of legal and regulatory processes is necessary for the public to meaningfully engage with DEP. The need to demystify complex information includes breaking down topics such as the various mechanisms to reduce lead exposure as well as how an advocate might have a role in influencing conditions DEP imposes on a permit.

Creating online and print materials that distill unfamiliar or complex scientific and regulatory information into digestible pieces is an important step. This includes removing jargon, using plain language,

and providing helpful tools like factsheets, frequently asked questions, infographics, video tutorials, social media posts, newsletters and guidance documents. This will facilitate understanding across varying educational levels and learning styles.

For example, WRM has identified that there is a need to increase education and awareness about the public's rights as water customers. For example, Drinking Water Watch, a tool to help the public understand who their local water provider is and how to access water quality reports and data, is greatly underutilized. Educational materials targeted to OBCs can be created that explain how to access and review their local water utility's consumer confidence reports and understand other data collected by DEP. Other programs can identify similar opportunities to educate OBCs on less-understood issues and key tenants of their workstreams. This exercise can inform future trainings and EJ seminars.

GOAL 1.3: IMPROVE MULTI-LINGUAL LANGUAGE ACCESS

New Jersey has a diverse population with many languages spoken across the state. This rich diversity requires DEP's assessment and development of a systematic approach to translating critical points of communication into the most common non-English languages and to providing interpretation services. This will ensure that Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations are served equitably.

The challenge of language diversity brings an opportunity to make DEP services more accessible to



a larger population of people. To overcome language barriers, DEP will develop ways to provide messaging, educational material, and in-person services in English and at least seven of the most commonly spoken languages in New Jersey. In 2021, DEP finalized its Language Access Plan, which provided a framework for guiding each program in providing language access to individuals who need assistance. In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination, and the New Jersey Language Access Law, this Language Access Plan is designed to ensure that all individuals regardless of language can participate in DEP programming, services and activities. By increasing the amount of limited English populations DEP serves, more people have an opportunity to participate in matters that impact their health and offer diverse perspectives that may not have been previously considered. The Department will ensure websites, publications, relevant outreach materials, and all other vital documents are available in English and at least seven of the most commonly spoken languages in NJ.

Utilizing the Language Access Plan as a guide, each Assistant Commissioner will assign Language Access Liaisons to develop a specific Language Access Plan for their program area to incorporate the needs of LEP populations in their communications. Each DEP program area Language Access plan will: (1) identify language access needs, (2) identify vital documents that will be translated into the top seven most commonly spoken languages, (3) assess communication channels by which LEP communities may interact with their program, (4) develop methods to notify the community of language assistance services, and (5) evaluate effectiveness in order to develop new strategies to serve LEP communities.

Multilingual language access also means going to where LEP communities are located. New Jersey has a rich diversity of communities across the state. Requesting invitations to share multilingual information at their gatherings, meetings, and events rather than relying on these communities to find the information themselves helps the Department to build trust, relationships, and understanding of their specific questions and concerns. This ensures that they are able to participate in DEP public engagement processes and learn about DEP tools and resources, which equips them to share information with their neighbors and increase future online participation.

Lastly, coordinating logistics to provide in-person or online language interpretation services for LEP communities can be a challenge. The Language Access Coordinator will develop guidance and train the Facilitator Corps on best practices which will include a language needs assessment of the community where engagement occurs and coordinating with vendors to secure interpretation services. The Facilitator Corps can support this work by using their training to develop best practices to equip staff with adequate resources to facilitate successful public engagement in any language.

GOAL 1.4 BUILD COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION WITH DEP AND INCREASE DEP PARTICIPATION WITH COMMUNITY

DEP, especially through its Office of Environmental Justice, [Community Collaborative Initiative](#) (CCI), and other varied outreach and engagement strategies across the Department has well established relationships and communication channels with some key environmental justice advocates and community-based organizations across the state and especially in key urban areas such as Camden, Newark, and Trenton. These large cities have a long history of organizing for EJ and well-organized groups who advocate on behalf of their community. However, there are many more EJ communities with no community-based organizations and few or no advocates that are in contact with DEP.

CCI does vital work to build relationships with municipal leaders in CCI cities and ensure they have access to DEP resources. This important work and the CCI liaisons should expand to more cities and towns across the state. Outside of CCI, programs across the agency need to ensure that there are meaningful public participation processes baked into the Department's decisions, and that direct in-community engagement is a programmatic imperative in DEP programs. Building relationships and building opportunities for engagement is vital to the agency's work.

The Department does often engage overburdened community members in more time-consuming engagement and research such as in focus groups, one-on-one interviews, long-form surveys, and other



Above photo: Member of the Greater Paterson Region Environmental Justice Affinity Group shares comments at the Paterson Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in September 2025.

activities. The need for this style of direct consultation is ever increasing and vital as it centers community members and ensures their expertise is heard and prioritized. Compensation need not be a requirement for every direct consultation, but it can be helpful to compensate communities for their time to increase participation and to ensure a diversity of voices is reflected in the program's outcome. DEP can create a policy that establishes a process and budget for programs to determine appropriate scenarios to compensate communities for direct consultation.

GOAL 1.5 EXPAND OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS IN REAL-TIME ON ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES

EJ advocates have expressed concerns that communication to affected OBCs following environmental incidents is often slow and deficient of details. Gaps in communication with OBCs following incidents at facilities can cause mistrust with government agencies who respond. While DEP, or other responding agencies, may not always have real-time details, after-incident communications about causation, prevention and accountability is crucial. While the jurisdiction for investigating incidents, and therefore the communication authority, may lie with an entity other than DEP, the Department can help facilitate communication to community members and collaboration across levels of government to best

serve OBCs, especially where there are imminent threats to public health.

The Department can establish a community-focused process for information dissemination during major incidents and emergencies and explore the extent to which DEP can play a facilitation role for instances where jurisdiction lies with other entities. One example is establishing a phone tree where DEP's Office of Emergency Management communicates information regarding an incident to the OEJ or another appropriate office who then distributes the information to a shortlist of relevant advocates who can disseminate the information to their local networks. OEJ can alert EJAC members and relevant advocates in the EJ Directory to share the incident information to their local networks as well.

There are topics in which DEP does collect real-time data and can develop ways to quickly publicize this information when it might be most needed. For example, the Department collects information on combined sewer overflow events from water utilities who are required to report them to DEP. The Department can develop a platform to provide the public with information about where overflows have occurred and where there might be flooding and road closures have occurred as a result of an overflow, thus directing the public on locations to avoid.

PRIORITY 2: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY





PRIORITY 2 ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

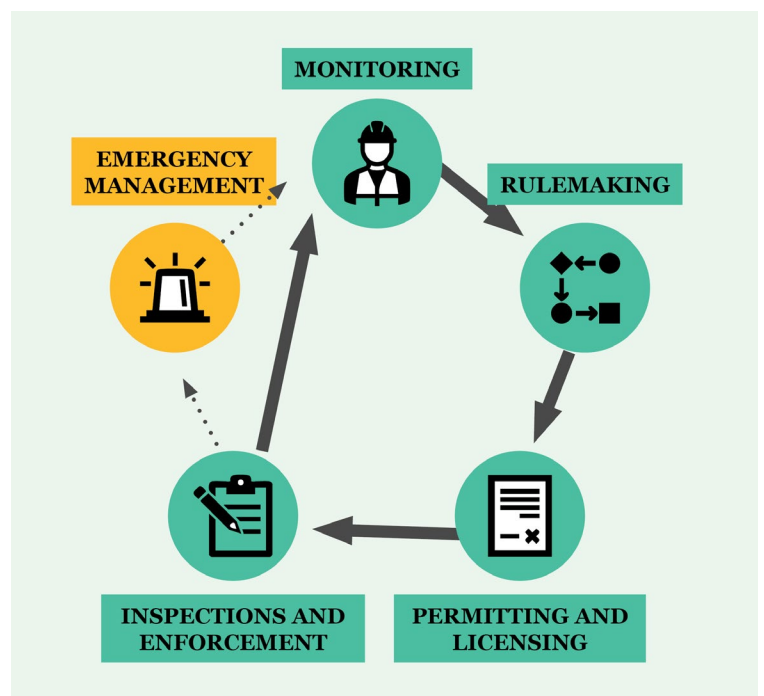


Ensuring that New Jersey residents have clean air, water, and land is a core mission of the Department. DEP achieves this through key functions implemented by teams across the agency. Through the assessment process, the following goals and actions have been identified to advance environmental justice in the implementation of these functions.

HOW DOES THE DEPARTMENT IMPROVE AND PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY?

One of the critical ways DEP improves and protects human health, safety, and the environment is to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the presence of pollutants in our air, water, and land. To ensure this, the Department monitors, establishes rulemaking processes, issues permits, inspects facilities, enforces requirements, and maintains a robust emergency management and response system. These key functions work as a system that enables DEP to protect New Jersey's environment. Most DEP offices are involved with at least one of these functions, which are described in more detail below

The infographic to the right describes the relationship between these tools/functions, with one leading into the next. For example, monitoring environmental media helps DEP set standards for regulations that provide the basis for permits issued to facilities that are inspected and enforced. Enforcement patterns can cause DEP to initiate new monitoring efforts to set new standards to better improve and protect human health, safety, and the environment.



SUMMARY OF GOALS AND ACTIONS

GOAL 2.1	Enhance Air, Water, Soil, and Habitat Monitoring Networks to Better Understand Environmental Conditions in OBCs	TEAM: AEMS, WRM, CSRR, UCF
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
2.1.1	Create comprehensive assessment of data within each program and identify how monitoring networks can be enhanced	M
2.1.2	Develop collaborations with community-based organizations to implement community science programs in OBCs	M
2.1.3	Present and contextualize public data on contaminated sites, habitat and forest health publicly	L
GOAL 2.2	Enhance EJ in DEP Permitting Processes	TEAM: DEP
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
2.2.1	Maximize opportunities to educate permit applicants on EJ	S
2.2.2	Expand meaningful public participation opportunities in non-EJ Rule-related DEP permitting	M
2.2.3	Ensure that appropriate programs' permitting SOPs include EJ considerations	M
GOAL 2.3	Offer Compliance Assistance to Small Facilities in OBCs	TEAM: OEP, C&E
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
2.3.1	Expand Compliance Assistance to Small Facilities in OBC	M
2.3.2	Build relationships with other state agencies and municipalities to help facilities communicate and get into compliance with regulations that have more than one jurisdiction	S
2.3.3	Create an SOP across CCI, enforcement, permitting, and OEJ for referring facilities to services	S
GOAL 2.4	Reduce Disproportionate Environmental Incidents in OBCs Through Enforcement	TEAM: OEP
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
2.4.1	Conduct data analysis to track and understand patterns of environmental incidents in OBCs	M
2.4.2	Develop a strategy for more targeted unannounced inspections in OBCs to close inspection gaps	M
GOAL 2.5	Allocate Enforcement Recoveries to Increase Environmental Improvement Projects in OBCs	TEAM: OEP, ONRR, C&E
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
2.5.1	Prioritize OBCs when selecting Natural Resource Damages restoration projects	S
2.5.2	Create a framework to prioritize SEPs in OBCs	S
2.5.3	Direct enforcement staff to engage responsible parties SEP discussions	S

TIME FRAME
Short-term S
Medium-term M
Long-term L
Ongoing O

HOW DOES THE DEPARTMENT PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY?

(Continued)

MONITORING

DEP monitors the state's environmental health providing essential data for planning, rulemaking, and permitting. This includes monitoring ambient air quality by AEMS, water bodies and water quality by WRM, and contaminated sites by CSSR. Monitoring helps set standards for pollution discharge and is key to informing remediation efforts.

RULEMAKING

DEP develops regulations that implement statutes, controlling activities impacting the environment and setting standards for pollution-generating activities and certain land uses. The rulemaking process involves stakeholder engagement, drafting proposals, public comment periods, and final rule adoption. The Office of Legal Affairs oversees rule development across AEMS, CSSR, WLM, and WRM.

PERMITTING

DEP evaluates and issues authorizations in the form of permits to regulate activities that may pose public health, safety, or environmental risks pursuant to applicable statutes and regulations. The permitting process includes evaluating applications, setting conditions, and managing public notifications and engagement. In the EJ context, permitting typically pertains to the Department's activities to regulate a facility's siting and operations rather than the Department's issuance of licenses for hunting, radiology, pesticide application, or a myriad of other activities the agency oversees. Permits of regulated facility sites and operations are primarily coordinated by DAQ, DSWM, DWQ, and DLRP. The Office of Permitting and Project Navigation works across these divisions to steward the permitting of complex projects.

INSPECTIONS & ENFORCEMENT

DEP ensures compliance with environmental laws through regular inspections and enforcement actions, addressing violations with administrative orders, notices of violation, and penalty assessments. Enforcement divisions within AEMS, CSSR, WRM, and WLM conduct inspections and respond to complaints and incidents reported via the WARN-DEP hotline. The Office of Enforcement Policy coordinates enforcement across media programs and seeks redress through litigation, working with the Division of Law to address illegal conduct.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Office of Emergency Management leads DEP's response to environmental emergencies, ensuring public safety and environmental protection. This includes planning and coordinating rapid responses to incidents like oil spills and hazardous material releases, with support from media-specific compliance units and the Bureau of Emergency Response.



CURRENT STRATEGIES

It is important not to consider established best practices whereby DEP is already ensuring environmental quality. These best practices are strengths that can be replicated within other applicable areas of the Department.

ILLEGAL DUMPING

Following the 2019 Trenton Community Engagement Session where residents informed the Department of illegal dumping activity, DEP conducted a large-scale clean up to address the community's concerns. The cleanup was a precursor to the launch of the Illegal Dumping Camera Program (IDCP) led by the [Community Collaborative Initiative](#) (CCI). The aim of this program is to combat illegal dumping in municipalities where residents face a disproportionate amount of illegal dumping that affects their quality of life.

These movable cameras are equipped to capture license plates and feature an audible warning system for added deterrence. Recognizing that effective implementation requires more than just technology, CCI developed a program that includes training, support, and community engagement. Seven cities were selected to participate in the pilot program. A two-day DEP-led training included how to install cameras and discussions about legal issues, fines,





resolutions, and effective techniques for capturing illegal dumping activities. Each city was provided with two cameras to begin the program. CCI conducts regular visits to camera locations and holds monthly sessions to review results and discuss effective strategies for combating illegal dumping. One year into the program, preliminary results are promising. Smaller towns have found the voice module particularly effective in deterring illegal dumping. Each city tailors the use of the cameras to address their specific challenges and goals.

SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS (SEPS):

SEPs can be incorporated into a settlement of an enforcement action allowing a responsible party to substitute an environmental project— like the installation of trees, electric vehicle chargers, and pollution control technologies— for payment of a portion of an enforcement penalty. In February 2024, DEP updated its SEP policy to strongly encourage responsible parties to consider community input in the development of a SEP, including the potential for

a full penalty reduction (within statutory restrictions and within the enforcement program’s discretion) if a responsible party completes a detailed Community Needs Assessment as part of their SEP proposal.

PRIORITY LEGAL ACTIONS IN OBCS:

DEP convenes regularly with the Division of Law (DOL) to identify and pursue potential legal actions against entities that have negatively impacted overburdened communities. To date, 80 environmental justice lawsuits and 20 Natural Resource Damages lawsuits have been filed since 2018. DOL maintains a [website](#) where users can view an explanation and current status of each legal action via an interactive map. The DEP builds relationships and receives regular feedback from OBCs through its Environmental Justice Community Engagement Tour. CCI’s ongoing work is also a vital pathway to receiving feedback from OBCs. These two methods allow DEP to identify areas of concern that require enforcement action.

GOALS, CHALLENGES, AND ACTIONS

Drawing on the challenges and opportunities revealed through the EJ assessment process, the following goals and actions aim to advance environmental justice as the Department ensures environmental quality.

GOAL 2.1: ENHANCE AIR, WATER, SOIL, AND HABITAT MONITORING NETWORKS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS IN OBCS

DEP collects a vast quantity of data on a variety of environmental media. At this time, not all data that may be of interest to the public is readily accessible to the public, may lack specific elements that would better serve certain OBC populations, or could be presented in more user-friendly formats. Consistent data collection, governance, and presentation practices ensure that the agency can understand the conditions and needs of all communities, and especially OBCs who may have worse off pollutant-loads. It also ensures New Jersey residents, researchers, community scientists and advocates are informed about the state of their community's environment. This will not only further transparency but build trust and capacity for communities to

engage meaningfully with the Department on various cases for the data it collects.

To first approach this, the Department will benefit from identifying the nature and scope of data sources, identifying data gaps, and exploring and implementing opportunities to make data more accessible.

Data gaps can be identified through enhancing existing networks that monitor the state's environmental media. For example, DEP's current air monitoring network consists of 29 stations across the state, designed to measure regional concentrations of the six criteria pollutants for which EPA sets National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS): ozone, particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and lead. These monitors are located in urban, suburban, and rural areas based on criteria such as population density, historical pollution levels, and geographical features to ensure comprehensive air quality assessment. OBC residents and advocates often suggest that the existing state air monitoring network may not fully capture localized negative air pollution from ports, highways, and industrial zones that impact some OBCs leading to monitoring gaps. This feedback on monitoring gaps paired with data analysis from EJMAP can highlight which OBCs are subject to adverse cumulative stressors, and then DEP can identify priority areas for enhanced air monitoring, potentially through the location of new monitoring stations or additional community air monitoring projects.

DEP also evaluates the health of New Jersey's surface waters to enhance, maintain, restore water quality to support aquatic life, recreation, water supply, and fish

Below photo: DEP and EPA staff tour the Paulsboro Water Treatment Plant prior to the Gloucester County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in February 2024.



consumption. DEP does this by preparing the biennial New Jersey [Integrated Water Quality Assessment Integrated Report](#) that assesses statewide water quality to identify and prioritize waters for protection, restoration, and additional monitoring or research. Similarly, the Integrated Report may not capture localized water quality data in surface waters nearby to OBCs—impacting the ability of OBCs to recreate or fish safely.

Community science can help identify water quality monitoring gaps, triggering DEP to verify concerns identified by community science through further investigation and illuminate next steps to improve water resources for OBCs. Community science can also support local decision making like empowering a municipality to reroute truck traffic or revisit zoning to add buffers between industrial and residential zones because of community data showing air quality hot spots. DEP can identify opportunities to partner with community-based organizations to conduct community science projects.

DEP also collects data that indicates the health of our soils, habitats, and forests. This data is important to maintain because the absence of habitat, for example, is a potential sign of environmental degradation and an indicator of community health. Internally, DEP has access to vast amounts of data that are not presented publicly—like the plethora of information DEP collects on contaminated sites—or the data is presented in formats that mostly serve industry professionals. Public data should be presented in tools that are easy to understand for a beginner; with appropriate explanations to help the public contextualize what data points mean. In the absence of an OBC’s ability to conduct their own science, data explorer tools are crucial for communities to alert DEP to local issues and data coverage gaps. DEP can audit the data it collects and explore which data can be made publicly available and prepare explorer tools for the public to view data easily.

GOAL 2.2 ENHANCE EJ IN DEP PERMITTING PROCESSES

The regulated community values consistency, predictability, and reliability in engagements with DEP regulators. Knowing the rules, policies, and processes that DEP requires, and what changes to anticipate enables regulated entities to more readily comply with environmental laws and obtain necessary permits or approvals without delay. Such predictability

helps keep facility construction and operation on time and on budget while supporting compliance with health, safety, and environmental standards. To aid predictability, DEP has created permitting checklists, guidance manuals, compliance advisories, and a myriad of training content to assist applicants in obtaining necessary permits and approvals.

As a result of New Jersey’s long history of strong environmental laws and the cooperative relationship DEP has developed with those it regulates, New Jersey is home to a largely compliant regulated community. Of course, DEP’s work to avoid, minimize, and mitigate pollution is limited by the statutory authority granted by the legislature, and the development of necessary law can sometimes lag behind the emergence of new health, safety, and environmental threats. For example, before the EJ Law was enacted in 2020, DEP did not have the authority to apply a cumulative impact analysis to a subset of its permit review processes. Applicant guidance can therefore often focus on the minimum requirements with which applicants must comply, leaving unexplored opportunities for applicants to go above and beyond. In these instances where additional legislative authority is not directed, DEP can equip applicants with data about the condition of an OBC’s pollutant load so that they are informed and empowered to make additional decisions about their applications.

The Department can focus efforts on educating the regulated community on the key data, best practices, and resources are available to consider environmental justice. Their consideration to go above and beyond minimum requirements will support efforts at being better neighbor which can prove to go a long way in building trust with OBCs. One example is to strongly encourage an applicant to review key environmental and public health data provided through EJMAP within permit application guidance or to offer consultations to prospective applicants that include discussions of innovative control technology that they can proactively and voluntarily plan to implement and the positive effects the equipment might have on OBCs and lifespan of their project. These efforts should include offering, or incorporating EJ considerations into existing video tutorials, webinars, fact sheets, templates and case studies tailored to the regulated community.

In addition to educating the regulated community, DAQ, DSWM, DWQ, and DLRP can review their program’s permitting processes to identify ways to



Above photo: EJ Advocate shares information about air quality issues in Newark at the Port Newark-Elizabeth Marine Terminal with DEP staff prior to the Essex County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in April 2024.

incorporate more opportunities for meaningful public participation. This can look like proactively extending internal DEP public comment periods to at least 60 days instead of 30 days, especially when the matter involves an activity within an OBC, to ensure enough time for community voices to provide input.

Behind the scenes, programs can also review their internal standard operating procedures and update them to include prompts that direct staff to consider how EJ might apply, even if not required to be considered. This could include staff conducting an analysis on EJMAP to ascertain which environmental and public health stressors are disproportionately impacting the OBC in question followed by an exploration of best management practices that avoids and minimizes said stressors that can be recommended to the applicant for voluntary implementation and sample talking points to discuss EJ generally with permit applicants.

GOAL 2.3: EXPAND COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE TO SMALL FACILITIES IN OBCS

Some facilities in overburdened communities, especially small businesses, might have a steep learning curve and an acute lack of resources that would make it difficult to be a good neighbor. While acts or omissions that compromise health, safety, and the environment should be met with appropriate enforcement action, the Department assumes good faith on the part of the regulated community. Our key principle of ‘trust but verify’ has led DEP to focus on

providing compliance assistance in the form of free consultations, training, and, where available, grants, that help to assure compliance with environmental laws.

DEP’s [Small Business Assistance Program](#) works closely with enforcement staff to proactively conduct outreach to the regulated community to offer free, confidential compliance assistance. The program offers a small facility the opportunity to understand the details of DEP requirements and how to come into compliance. With this support, they can also better understand any violations received and how to best address them. They also help facilities go above and beyond their permit requirements by helping them connect to resources, understand a variety of regulations, and apply for grants to improve operations and reduce emissions. The focus of this program can expand to include prioritized assistance for facilities in OBCs to improve outcomes in those communities. Prioritization can entail first starting with an enforcement analysis to match where there are corridors of small, out-of-compliance facilities with where there are disproportionate environmental stressors to create a priority list of areas to target for direct assistance. Additionally, an important piece of implementing a priority OBC focus involves conducting outreach, building relationships in diverse communities, and building partnerships with relevant small business associations. This approach can expand to develop an outreach campaign to help educate small businesses about how facility operations may be connected to impacts in their community. Outreach can ensure facilities know of the existence of this

resource and help the Department build productive relationships with the regulated community before formal enforcement strategies are implemented.

GOAL 2.4: REDUCE DISPROPORTIONATE ENVIRONMENTAL INCIDENTS IN OBCS THROUGH ENFORCEMENT

In some cases, longstanding routine compliance inspection schedules for certain regulated facilities may leave long gaps between inspections, which can inadvertently enable instances of regulatory noncompliance to go unresolved for prolonged periods. This risk may be especially exacerbated in OBCs with multiple regulated facilities. DEP partially relies on residents to report issues via the WARN-DEP app and hotline. WARN-DEP in addition to relationships built through the CCI and OEJ programs can prompt unscheduled inspections and potential enforcement actions. However, this places an additional reporting burden on communities and residents, with varying awareness of, and capacity to, engage with these reporting options. This can potentially lead to inconsistent enforcement coverage and delays in addressing concerns.

DEP can reduce environmental incidents and emergencies through increased, unannounced enforcement sweeps in OBCs of concern. The Department can benefit from understanding where there is a need for increased enforcement sweeps in EJ communities, what types of sites and facilities should be targeted, and when the Department should develop an enhanced inspection schedule for facilities of concern. Prioritization strategies like analyzing past incidents to understand trends, conducting disproportionate environmental stressor analyses using EJMAP, identifying recalcitrant offenders, and mapping odor and other incident hotspots may be key considerations for deciding which OBCs to prioritize for enhanced surveillance.

GOAL 2.5: ALLOCATE ENFORCEMENT RECOVERIES TO INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS IN OBCS

DEP can amplify the delivery of environmental benefits in OBCs by allocating enforcement recoveries to environmental improvement projects in OBCs

affected by noncompliance with environmental laws and the degradation of natural resources.

Through its Office of Natural Resource Restoration (ONRR), DEP works to restore injured natural resources by ensuring that responsible parties conduct restoration activities, recovering monetary payments for natural resource damages (NRD) that are constitutionally dedicated for reinvestment in restoration projects, and by constructing or contributing to restoration projects across New Jersey. In the identification and prioritization of natural resource restoration matters, DEP can prioritize enforcement of restoration obligations in OBCs. To better ensure that monetary natural resource damage recoveries benefit local environments and landscapes in OBCs, DEP can directly engage with OBC-serving institutions and organizations in the identification of natural resource restoration project opportunities. DEP can also prioritize the allocation and distribution of grant programs to serve OBC needs, including to fund construction of rain gardens to capture and filter urban stormwater runoff, restore native plants and wildlife habitat, improve waterway quality and public access to and enjoyment of natural resources.

Additionally, with respect to the enforcement of environmental quality regulations, the Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEP) policy establishes a vital program that can be utilized to prioritize projects beneficial to OBCs. When reviewing early iterations of likely settlements, enforcement officers can increase the number of SEPs that are considered by discussing a SEP with a responsible party. SOPs for settlement negotiations can include a step to direct enforcement officers to determine if the matter would be suitable for a SEP and if so, to remind the responsible party of their option to explore a SEP if they so choose.



PRIORITY 3: INVEST IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS



PRIORITY 3 INVEST IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS



Financial investments for environmental improvements are essential in DEP’s mission of improving and protecting public health, safety, and the environment. While many DEP programs currently implement mechanisms to prioritize investments to OBCs, there are additional opportunities to expand DEP’s financial resources, promote funding opportunities, and reduce barriers for OBCs to access environmental improvements.

HOW DOES THE DEPARTMENT INVEST IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS?

Whether it is maintaining state parks or improving water infrastructure, DEP invests its discretionary and entitlement funding from the federal government and state budget across all programs to improve the environment and advance DEP’s mission. In addition to direct spending, DEP provides numerous streams of funding to local governments and nonprofit organizations via grants and loans. Each DEP program area disburses and provides funding and technical assistance to applicants.

The Division of Budget and Financial Operations, which falls under the Assistant Commissioner of Management and Budget, ensures that the fiscal

resources of the Department are aligned with the mission of the Department, ensures fiscal accountability, and delivers fiscal and administrative support to DEP and its external customers.

DEP aims to align and prioritize our investments and other various financial resources to the OBCs most affected by environmental and public health stressors, and who experience a lack of environmental and public health benefits. To that end, DEP reorganized and established the Community Investment & Economic Revitalization (CIER) program in 2022, the main function of which is to strengthen investments in natural capital that can enhance quality of life for all New Jerseyans, especially overburdened communities. DEP is committed to ensuring that its funds are utilized and distributed in a fair, equitable, and non-discriminatory manner.



SUMMARY OF GOALS AND ACTIONS

GOAL 3.1

Promote and Expand Opportunities for Investment in Environmental Improvements in OBCs

TEAM: DEP, CIER

ACTIONS

TIME FRAME

3.1.1 Evaluate funding programs to promote EJ investments where feasible

S

3.1.2 Create section to highlight OBC-specific funding on DEP's Grants and Loans website

S

3.1.3 Assess and resolve barriers to entry for OBCs

M

GOAL 3.2

Measure Investments in OBCs to Advance and Expand Impact

TEAM: DEP, OEP, DOIT

ACTIONS

TIME FRAME

3.2.1 Develop an internal dashboard to track EJ-specific funding

S

GOAL 3.3

Financially Support OBCs to Manage and Recover from Environmental Emergencies and Emerging Public Health Challenges

TEAM: DEP, OEP, DOIT

ACTIONS

TIME FRAME

3.3.1 Identify set-aside funds from DEP programs for environmental emergencies

L

3.3.2 Reduce financial barriers to accessing aid for emerging public health challenges

M

TIME FRAME

Short-term

S

Medium-term

M

Long-term

L

Ongoing

O





CURRENT STRATEGIES

It is important not to lose sight of best practices in which the Department is already delivering justice as we invest in environmental improvements. These best practices are strengths that can be replicated within other applicable areas of the Department.

PRIORITIZING FUNDING FOR, AND FUNDING SPENT IN, OBCS

For many of DEP's funding activities, we give priority ranking to projects in, or that would benefit, overburdened communities to ensure that funds are targeted to communities with the greatest need. For example, OBC priority is carved out in the following investment examples:

New Jersey's portion of funds from the [Volkswagen Settlement Fund](#) and [Regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory](#) (RGGI) auction proceeds are prioritized toward the replacement of diesel-fueled medium- and heavy-duty vehicles and non-road equipment with electric equipment in environmental justice communities.

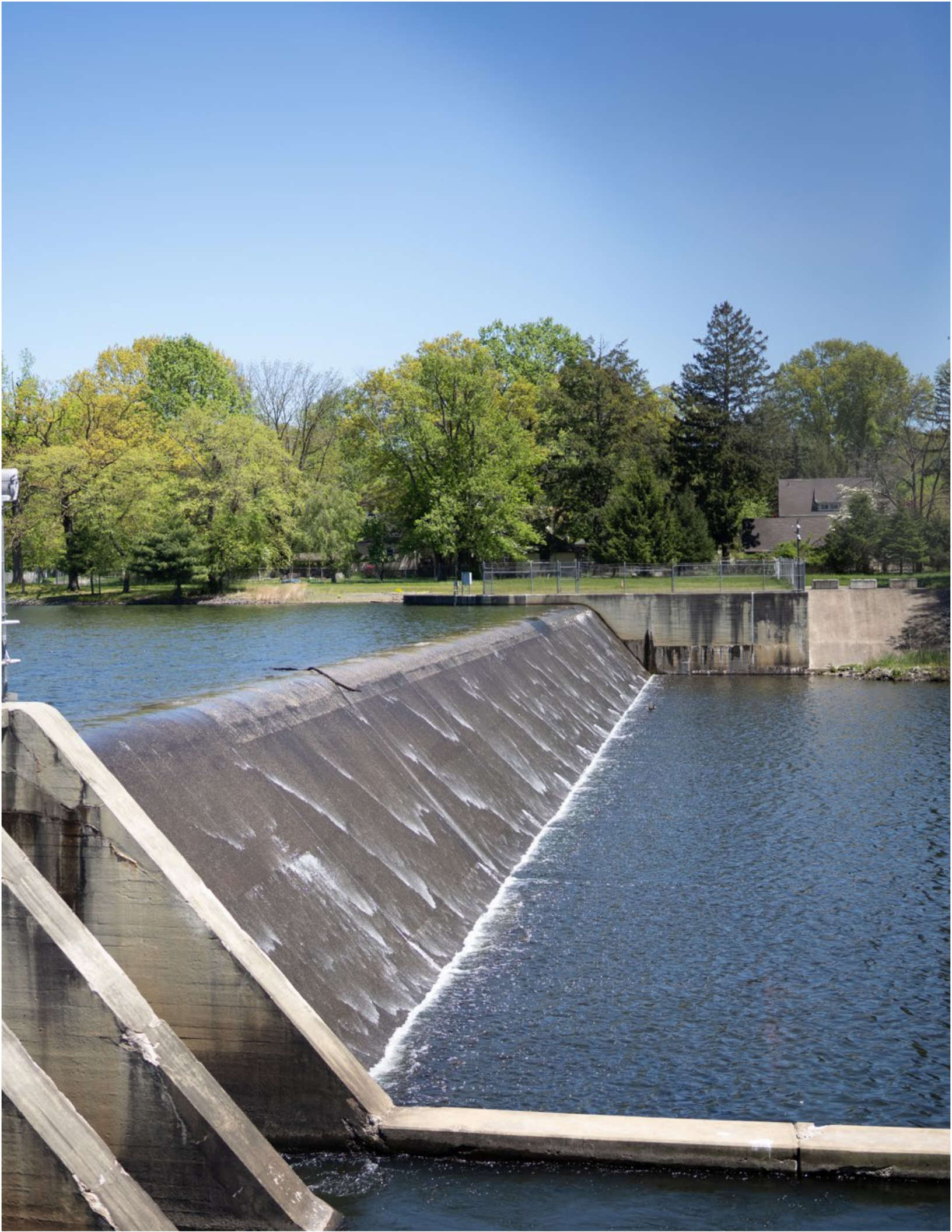
The [Green Acres](#) program prioritizes funding for land acquisition and park development projects located in, or easily accessible from, an overburdened community subject to adverse cumulative stressors and the cap on demolition cost reimbursements does not apply to Urban Aid municipalities.

The [Urban and Community Forestry](#) program supports the stewardship and effective management of trees and forest resources through New Jersey, which is especially important in EJ communities as tree plantings can decrease heat islands effects and reduce localized flooding. The program awards

additional points for eligible EJ communities on grant applications, hosts special projects, events and trainings directly in EJ communities, and works with local volunteer organizations to encourage community participation.

The [NJ Water Bank](#) is a partnership between DEP and the NJ Infrastructure Bank that funds capital improvements for drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater projects at very low interest rates. The program prioritizes disadvantaged communities (DACs) by providing opportunities for 100% principal forgiveness on planning and design loans, and guaranteed funds for capital improvement projects for DACs that participate in the [NJ Technical Assistance Program](#).

To ensure equitable investments in EJ communities are not limited to the above-mentioned funding streams, DEP developed a policy so the Department applies a systematic, consistent, and comprehensive approach to its investments in OBCs. The DEP "Policy to Prioritize Investments for Overburdened Communities in New Jersey," instructs programs to prioritize funds to OBCs subject to adverse cumulative environmental and public health stressors. The policy includes guidance for DEP programs on how to craft requests for proposals and applications that ensure consideration of environmental justice is included.



GOALS, CHALLENGES, AND ACTIONS

Drawing on the challenges and opportunities revealed through the EJ assessment process, the following goals and actions aim to advance environmental justice as the Department ensures investments in environmental improvements.

GOAL 3.1: PROMOTE AND EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS IN OBCs

OBCs have been historically underinvested, which has contributed to systemic challenges in addressing and advancing environmental improvements. While DEP administers financial investments as a mechanism to improve and protect public health, safety, and the environment throughout the state, inequitable strategies in delivering those resources to OBCs exist. As a result, valuable investment opportunities are left underutilized by OBCs. Multiple barriers can explain this underutilization that include lack of awareness of available funding opportunities, as well as the lack of financial and staff resources to apply for opportunities or implement environmental improvements. These challenges may exist within both local governments and community-based organizations.

To better promote and expand investment opportunities, it is imperative for DEP to first evaluate its current strategies of EJ-related investments and ensure the agency is addressing any limitations in delivering equitable financial resources. There are opportunities to assess this via CIER's internal grant reporting tool and the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) procedural operations. The grant reporting tool allows users to access detailed information about grants for which DEP programs apply, such as match amount, project type/description, priorities addressed, internal partners, and DEP program lead. Additionally, OMB can conduct a detailed assessment of secured DEP-wide funds that specifically prioritize EJ-related investments. In

both instances, amendments can be made to add EJ-related screening questions to track if resources will go directly to OBCs or may benefit OBCs. For example, the grant reporting tool can include questions for the grant manager to answer regarding whether the grant project will be located in an OBC and whether there's a prioritization component to award OBCs. Similarly, OMB can include additional questions in their collaboration with DEP programs, such as the amount allocated for OBCs in the funding opportunity. Additionally, questions can be incorporated into both the grant reporting tool and OMB's fund tracking to determine whether programs have reviewed and complied with DEP's Policy to Prioritize Financial Investments for OBCs in their grant application and fund allocation. These amendments will help DEP programs evaluate if OBC investment opportunities are missed. To better promote funding opportunities to the public, the Department can raise awareness via the [Grant and Loan Program](#) website to better feature OBC-related funding opportunities.

After evaluating and ensuring adequate funding opportunities for OBCs, it is helpful for the Department to resolve barriers impacting OBCs from applying and utilizing DEP's financial resources. To overcome barriers of entry, the Department can explore creative funding solutions in cost-sharing and collaborative partnerships. If the Department has discretionary authority over whether to require a grant match, and is not required by state or federal statutes to do so, DEP can identify opportunities to waive match requirements, allow for in-kind or private matches, or other methods of flexibility for grant programs designed to benefit OBCs.

Innovative and collaborative partnerships can also be explored to secure and utilize funds as demonstrated by DEP's partnership with Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and Arcadis to accelerate lead pipe replacements. RWJF is providing guaranteed funds for predevelopment services delivered by Arcadis, an additional partner, which will conduct lead service line inventories, develop engineering designs, phasing plans, and technical assistance with applications to the New Jersey Water Bank. This targeted support will increase municipalities' capacity to secure and utilize funds, ensuring their projects are shovel-ready.

While the partnerships can be a source of knowledge sharing and technical expertise, the Department

can additionally seek to offer technical assistance to ensure that OBCs have the necessary planning resources to develop competitive grant applications. Technical assistance enhances capacity by offering expert guidance in the review and development of project plans. This support is essential to ensure OBCs have the necessary upfront planning resources to develop competitive grant applications. DEP currently offers pre-planning assistance through programs such as the Bureau of Technical and Financial Services within Green Acres and Water Resource Management's (WRM) NJ Technical Assistance Program (NJTAP). The Bureau of Technical and Financial Services provides technical support for municipal, county, nonprofit, and state open space acquisition and recreation development efforts, including technical review of [land survey plans](#) and [appraisal reports](#) for municipal, county, nonprofit and state land acquisition projects. NJTAP helps OBCs identify lead services lines, develop plans for water infrastructure improvements, identify federal and state sources of funding, and assist with public outreach.

DEP programs can conduct a comprehensive review of their functions and public interactions to identify potential gaps where additional support for OBCs can be effectively utilized. Programs can then designate funds for technical assistance to support OBCs in

pre-planning grant application efforts. Additionally, offering workshops, webinars, and other training will equip OBCs for future federal and state funding opportunities, which will reduce application preparation time and streamline consultant costs for OBC applicants' consultant costs. By leveraging program expertise, DEP supports diverse entities in navigating the complexities of funding acquisition and project development.

GOAL 3.2: MEASURE INVESTMENTS IN OBCS TO ADVANCE AND EXPAND IMPACT

Knowing whether OBCs receive investments at levels that address their needs and the investments' impact over time will help DEP to better implement its programs. While DEP has established a policy to prioritize financial investments for OBCs, a comprehensive way to measure whether equitable outcomes are achieved is absent. DEP uses dashboards to measure its progress in prioritizing OBCs for a few of its investments. For example, the [Climate Investments Dashboard](#) displays the information about projects awarded RGGI funds. The dashboard includes an OBC layer and estimates the total carbon dioxide avoided and sequestered. The [Water Infrastructure Spending Dashboard](#) illustrates

Below photo: An electric school bus is shown during an announcement from Commissioner Latourette and First Lady Tammy Murphy in October 2024 announcing a \$15 million investment in zero-emission school buses and charging infrastructure through the New Jersey Electric School Bus Grant Program.



clean and drinking water investments administered through the NJ Water Bank. However, without this measurement strategy embedded within all of DEP's applicable investments, DEP and the public lack readily accessible information to highlight potential investment gaps.

One opportunity to measure equitable outcomes is the development of an agency-wide database to track investments that can be used to identify OBC funding gaps. Tracking can be accomplished through internal reporting via OMB, where programs identify appropriated funds and the portions that are allocated to OBCs. An interactive public map can then be developed to illustrate funding award amounts, project location, type, and funding entity, similar to the Climate Investments and Water Infrastructure Spending Dashboards. In addition to financial metrics that can be included in the map, programs can present and track environmental metrics to provide a comprehensive view of impact. DEP programs can utilize DEP investment tool to periodically review financial and environmental benchmarks. By tailoring this review, programs can ensure disproportionate investment gaps are addressed.

GOAL 3.3: FINANCIALLY SUPPORT OBCS TO MANAGE AND RECOVER FROM ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCIES AND EMERGING PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES

Environmental emergencies and emerging public health challenges affect everyone negatively, but OBCs often suffer more severely because of disproportionate underlying circumstances like higher pollution levels, underlying health disparities, and poverty. Funding mechanisms should exist to help OBCs better manage and recover from these impacts. Traditionally, disaster funds from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) cover debris removal; repairs for roads, bridges, water control facilities, public buildings and equipment, public utilities, parks and recreational facilities, and individuals' homes and property; displacement and transportation costs, and more; however, this relief is provided only after a state of emergency is declared. Water main breaks or some wildfire events may not meet the necessary criteria the governor needs to declare such an emergency that then makes FEMA funds available, leaving many communities without a safety net. Further, during an environmental emergency, many local governments

encounter challenges in promptly providing essential resources such as bottled water or temporary shower facilities while simultaneously addressing repairs.

Additionally, novel challenges from emerging public health issues, such as PFAS contamination of drinking water, can also place a financial burden on OBCs, especially those with private wells. Of the 3500 OBCs in NJ, approximately 650 (18%) have more than five wells tested. Among these, over 500 (~77%) are adversely impacted by the Private Well Testing Act (PwTA) drinking water stressor in EJMAP. As opposed to water utilities, which must comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act to provide safe drinking water to its customers, private well owners are responsible for providing safe water to their households without the same level of regulatory oversight. Moreover, the sole regulatory requirements for private well testing are outlined in the Private Well Testing Act (PwTA), which mandates testing only during property transactions. This places vulnerable communities in danger of groundwater contaminant exposures, such as PFAS forever chemicals. PFAS is often odor and colorless and provides no easy indicator to prompt testing. Yet, because of the universal proliferation of PFAS compounds into the environment via many exposure pathways, regular testing of private wells is imperative. This places a financial burden on all private well-owners who may be exposed to emerging contaminants but especially overburdened private well-owners who face affordability constraints in testing and remediating their systems.

To support OBCs in environmental emergencies and emerging public health challenges, dedicated state resources should be explored. Legislatively directed financial support for environmental emergencies will position the State to quickly deploy funds to municipalities needing to provide temporary aid to their residents, including the provision of bottled water and other necessities. Given the unpredictability of emergency incidents it is crucial that the State ensures resources are available for communities during crises, and especially for OBCs. Dedicated state resources to assist private-well owners who meet affordability criteria, for example, can also be explored. These solutions will increase the State's capacity to respond in more effective, customized, and tailored ways and reduce financial barriers to improve public health outcomes.

PRIORITY 4: EXPAND AND IMPROVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES





PRIORITY 4 EXPAND AND IMPROVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES



From the eastern shores to the forested mountains of the state, New Jersey holds natural and historic resources to be enjoyed by all of the state’s residents and visitors. As the Department continues to prioritize thriving natural and historic resources, ensuring equitable access to resources for all— especially OBCs—is imperative.

New Jersey’s unparalleled natural and cultural resources, like our shorelines, state parks and trails, and preserved historic sites are some of the state’s greatest assets. DEP has a duty to steward them in trust for the public and is therefore responsible for ensuring every member of the public has access to these resources.

Our State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites program operates the state’s parks, forests, historic sites, and natural and historic interpretation and education programs, while our Fish & Wildlife program improves and protects New Jersey’s wildlife, including endangered species, and conserves habitat. Multiple programs across the agency, including the Division of Land Resource Protection, ensure New Jerseyans can access tidal waterways, including the Jersey Shore, and the State Historic Preservation Office identifies

and protects sites to preserve New Jersey’s rich history.

In addition to being disproportionately impacted by pollution, overburdened communities can often lack access to the state’s natural resources disproportionately. Examples include a disproportionate lack of adequate tree canopy, making many dense OBCs significantly hotter in the summer as compared to communities with average tree canopy levels and park and open space, which limits opportunities for recreation and relaxation leading to physical and mental well-being.

Environmental justice requires that overburdened communities are provided with meaningful access to these environmental and public health benefits.



SUMMARY OF GOALS AND ACTIONS

GOAL 4.1	Expand Natural Resources in OBCs	TEAM: SPFHS, CIER, ONRR
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
4.1.1	Expand land acquisitions in OBCs	O
4.1.2	Expand partnerships with local governments in OBCs to co-manage natural and historic resources	O
4.1.3	Prioritize natural resource enhancements in OBCs as part of natural resource damages strategy deployment.	M
GOAL 4.2	Improve Equitable User Experience	TEAM: DLRP, SPFHS, CIER
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
4.2.1	Update Public Access Map with OBC layer and missing access points	S
4.2.2	Audit and update recreation and advisory signage in OBCs	S
4.2.3	Ensure all parks, trails, and other natural resources in OBCs are well-maintained and entrances are clearly marked with appropriate multilingual signs	L
4.2.4	Improve wayfinding for all segments linking transit, shuttle, and other transportation options	L
GOAL 4.3	Address Natural and Historic Resource Transportation and Accessibility Gaps	TEAM: SPFHS
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
4.3.1	Maintain local partnerships to facilitate virtual programs, transportation solutions, and youth trips	M
4.3.2	Partner with transit organizations to improve parks accessibility	L
4.3.3	Improve accessibility within parks through bike share program	L
4.3.4	Enhance accessibility through notification systems for park closures and shuttle tracking apps	M
4.3.5	Provide free state park passes distributed by libraries in OBCstracking apps	S
GOAL 4.4	Incorporate Cultural Significance and Inclusivity in Recreational and Educational Spaces	TEAM: SPFHS
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
4.4.1	Train park staff in cultural sensitivity	S
4.4.2	Co-create programs with community partners for OBCs	L
4.4.3	Create multilingual, self-guided educational materials	M
GOAL 4.5	Deploy Creative Communication and Engagement Tailored for OBCs	TEAM: SPFHS
ACTIONS		TIME FRAME
4.5.1	Create campaign for OBCs to increase awareness about less visited parks and natural resources	M
4.5.2	Consider health perspectives as co-benefits to appeal to OBC residents	M
4.5.3	Launch multi-lingual parks branding campaign	S

TIME FRAME Short-term **S** Medium-term **M** Long-term **L** Ongoing **O**



Above photo: The historic Central Railroad of New Jersey (CRRNJ) Terminal in Liberty State Park, Jersey City.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

It is important not to lose sight of best practices in which the Department is already delivering justice as we manage accessible natural resources. These best practices are strengths that can be replicated within other applicable areas of the Department.

OUTSIDE, TOGETHER!

In April 2022, Commissioner LaTourette signed [Administrative Order 2022-12](#) establishing the creation of an Advisory Committee that guided the development of New Jersey's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, known as [Outside, Together!](#), published in December 2023. Updated every five years, the plan identifies statewide recreation needs and opportunities and sets forth a program to implement measures to address them. Environmental justice is one of six principles in the plan, which highlights the emphasis on better serving the health and wellness of residents in OBCs through high value outdoor recreation and open space. Representatives of OBCs were appointed to the Advisory Committee.

FUNDING URBAN PARKS AND INCREASING URBAN TREE CANOPY

There is a disparity in the amount and quality of open space, recreational opportunities, and tree canopy in overburdened communities compared to affluent white communities. To address this disparity, Governor Murphy and the NJ Legislature have appropriated millions of dollars in non-matching, 100 percent grant funding for urban parks projects that advance recreation, conservation, and historic preservation projects in Adversely Stressed Overburdened Communities in [Urban Aid](#)

[Municipalities](#). Further, the NJ Urban and Community Forestry Program builds local capacity to manage urban trees and forests and is active in 96% of the communities identified as OBCs. OBCs receive priority on grant applications to fund the planting and maintenance of trees, receive tailored technical assistance, and participate in trainings.

NJ GREENWAY PROJECT

Launched in 2022, the NJ Greenway Project is an initiative to develop a 9-mile greenway stretching from Montclair to Jersey City, encompassing parts of Essex and Hudson counties. The project aims to transform former rail lines into a continuous network of parks and trails, enhancing access to green spaces in urban and overburdened communities. The initiative also encompasses transforming and restoring degraded areas, such as the collaborative cleanup of trash and illegal dumping in the Kearny segment of the greenway, to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for residents. The project is expected to be completed in phases, with ongoing collaboration with local governments and community organizations to ensure that the needs and preferences of residents in these communities are integrated into the planning process. The Greenway will increase accessibility to parks and safe biking paths in overburdened communities, which have historically lacked such amenities

GOALS, CHALLENGES, AND ACTIONS

Drawing on the challenges and opportunities revealed through the EJ assessment process, the following goals and actions aim to advance environmental justice as the Department manages accessible natural resources.

GOAL 4.1 EXPAND NATURAL RESOURCES IN OBCS

One of the primary obstacles residents of OBCs face in accessing the state’s natural and historic resources is the general lack of such spaces within, and in close proximity, to OBCs. Many of NJ’s OBCs tend to be in highly developed, historically industrialized urban areas with few remaining open spaces and limited access to the state’s natural resources.

This presents an opportunity to restore natural resources in OBCs by acquiring land to create urban parks in partnerships with local governments. Through the [State Land Acquisition program](#), Green Acres is working with local partners to identify land for potential parks, including previously contaminated sites, that can be reborn as vibrant trails and urban green spaces. This two-part strategy involves acquiring urban land for close-to-home recreation or open space, and either having DEP manage the land or forming partnerships with local government and nonprofit entities to do so—alleviating the Department’s operational limitations. This initiative began with outreach to 12 municipalities through the Department’s Community Collaborative Initiative and has expanded to other surrounding municipalities and their host counties. To ensure a focus on expanding natural resources in OBCs, DEP can prioritize expansion of acquisitions in OBCs within the state acquisitions program.

Another opportunity to expand natural resources in OBCs is through the natural resource damages settlement process. The DEP has authority under statutes like the Spill Compensation and Control Act to pursue Natural Resource Damages (NRD) for injury to

public resources such as groundwater, wetlands, and wildlife. Damages may include the cost of restoring or replacing resources, compensation for lost public use (e.g., recreation), and even the intrinsic value of the resource. DEP can utilize NRD settlements to improve the health of natural resources in OBCs, increase access to recreational opportunities, and restore lost environmental and social benefits.

The Department can expand the types of natural resource restoration projects that are considered so that projects better align with the needs of OBCs while still complying with the legal requirement of enhancing the specific damaged resource (such as waterbody). Green stormwater infrastructure projects, such as rain gardens—which offer multiple benefits to OBCs like reducing flooding, cooling, and cleaning the air—are already considered. Other potential restoration projects in OBCs could include planting street trees, creating micro-forests, and removing impervious surfaces.

GOAL 4.2 IMPROVE EQUITABLE USER EXPERIENCE

While the lack of natural resources present within OBCs is a key issue, the quality of natural resources that are currently accessible to OBCs and their resulting user experience offer different challenges. There is anecdotal evidence that some of NJ’s waterways are being used for unsafe activities outside of their recreational designation. An example of this is subsistence fishing in areas of fish consumption advisories, which may disproportionately affect OBCs. DEP can help curtail these unsafe activities by installing proper signage to ensure communities are aware of relevant recreation and consumption advisories. While in the past DEP has posted signage regarding relevant advisories, it currently does not continue to replace signage thus leaving a gap in awareness for communities. In line with improving OBCs’ experience in engaging with natural resources, some access points to NJ trails in OBCs are poorly maintained causing the trails to be underutilized because trails may appear unsafe or residents may be unaware that a public access point exists. In addition to an unclear access point, navigation to a park or natural resources may be confusing and underutilized. For example, Liberty State Park offers a shuttle to transport visitors to the park from a nearby NJ Transit

stop. However, the shuttle location is a five-minute walk from the transit stop and lacks clear signage and directions for someone who may not be aware of the shuttle availability and location.

DEP can begin to address these challenges by first including the OBC layer in DEP Public Access Map. This map shows thousands of public access points and its amenities along New Jersey's tidal waters and can be updated routinely with the OBC layers to ensure all access points are accurately represented. DEP can then engage with community-based partners and EJAC to identify priority public access locations in OBCs in need of proper signage and additional maintenance. In locations where known subsistence fishing is occurring, it may be imperative to audit current signage and communication pathways for OBCs. Based on this audit, signage can be installed in appropriate languages to inform OBCs about consumption advisories. DEP can also prioritize and ensure all state-owned natural resources in OBCs, including parks, trails, waterfront and waterway access points, are well-maintained and clearly marked. This can also explore partnerships with transportation agencies to ensure all segments linking transit, shuttle, and other transportation options to state parks and historic resources are clearly marked in a user-friendly manner, including multilingual wayfinding signs where appropriate.

GOAL 4.3 ADDRESS NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCE TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBILITY GAPS

Many OBC residents cannot access the largest public benefit managed by DEP—our natural and historic resources. Access issues exist because these resources are often located far from OBCs and OBC residents may lack the financial means to travel to and within these facilities by car. For natural and historic resources that can be accessed by public transportation, travel and financial accessibility within the parks may present an additional challenge. Transportation solutions to make these resources more accessible without a personal vehicle are needed, especially for OBCs. Solutions will need to include a comprehensive strategy that considers travel to the closest transit stops, travel from transit stop to the state park or historic facility entrance, and transportation within the facility. A navigational tool that provides real-time tracking and alerts may be especially helpful to bring awareness and address transportation challenges. The tool may specifically include notifications on park closures as well as tracking for park shuttle schedules and locations.

The Department can explore collaboration with transit agencies to increase public transportation



options that link OBCs with state facilities and allow park shuttles to pick up visitors directly from transit stops. A navigational tool that provides real-time tracking and alerts may be especially helpful to bring awareness and address transportation challenges. The tool may specifically include notifications on park closures as well as tracking for park shuttle schedules and locations.

Such solutions may be particularly easier to implement for parks and facilities in denser areas with existing transit availability. In less dense places with little to no transit opportunities, the Department can explore providing its own transportation services to bring people, especially youth groups, to outdoor opportunities. While it may not be feasible to bring every OBC resident to a state park, DEP can explore bringing outdoor experiences directly to OBC residents through virtual programming or by partnering with local libraries, community and/or faith-based organizations to provide their own transportation services.

Exploring non-vehicle forms of transportation is an opportunity to ensure accessibility for those without personal vehicles. Bike and electric scooter sharing programs are becoming increasingly popular in many areas across the state. Installing these within large parks can help to improve non-vehicle accessibility.

To increase financial accessibility, as well as awareness about public natural and historic resources, DEP can prioritize providing multiple free access passes to libraries in OBCs. Accessibility can be ensured for multiple age groups and demographics by providing both paper and digital versions of such passes and providing libraries with posters, flyers, and materials to create an awareness campaign.

GOAL 4.4 INCORPORATE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND INCLUSIVITY IN RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SPACES

DEP staff that manage and provide educational programming in the state's outdoor and historic spaces are invaluable towards ensuring the public is enriched by our natural and cultural resources. Yet, the staff's work can be even more meaningful if staff reflect the racial and linguistic diversity of our state

and approach their work with an ethic of cultural inclusivity. Doing so will ensure that all visitors feel included and welcome and historically under-engaged populations become returning visitors.

DEP can increase partnerships with community-based and faith-based organizations to serve as programmatic bridges to increase OBC visitors' sense of welcome and sustained participation in educational and interpretive programming. DEP can invite these partners to develop programming at state parks appropriate for the needs of under-engaged communities, such as beginner-level outdoor courses in fishing, kayaking, hiking, or other recreational activities. Instructors and guides from minority backgrounds, with experience working with OBCs, or who are multi-lingual can help to better engage more OBC visitors. While DEP builds community partnerships to serve as programmatic bridges, DEP can develop interpretive signage and placards in relevant, non-English languages to assist OBC visitors in self-guided tours. Interpretive signage and placards should incorporate culturally significant narratives and elements, making OBCs feel respected and seen. Over the long term, DEP can also try to increase staff diversity through increasing awareness about DEP's natural and historic resource employment opportunities in OBCs through partnerships with educational and community institutions. Lastly, DEP will continue to engage and strengthen its relationship with tribal communities and incorporate indigenous history and practices within its educational materials.

GOAL 4.5 DEPLOY CREATIVE COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT TAILORED FOR OBCS

While natural resource availability and accessibility issues exist in OBCs, an additional challenge is present: determining if uniform communication campaigns used throughout the state to promote our natural and historic resources are effective in increasing OBC visitation and utilization. Urban and seasonal spaces, like Liberty State Park or the State's beaches are most popular, but many of the state's lesser-known natural resources can be utilized year-round and for supplemental health benefits.

Utilizing natural spaces for recreational purposes offers many benefits that may not be directly



Above photo: Participants of DEP's Youth Inclusion Initiative joins a hike in Liberty State Park in 2025.

marketed toward OBC residents. There are free or low-cost opportunities to hike, walk, bike, and picnic, among many other activities, in the state's natural resources. The physical and mental health benefits of outdoor exercise and natural spaces among OBCs can be marketed to help bring awareness of these underutilized spaces to OBC residents. DEP can tailor existing communication and engagement strategies to market the physical and mental health benefits to OBCs. Considering availability and accessibility issues, appealing to personal benefits, including health, may be a compelling engagement angle for OBCs.

Additionally, some OBCs, especially those located further away from the state's parks and forests and without means to travel to them, may not have had many experiences with NJ's wild spaces. For some, the extent of that experience may extend to just a singular school field trip. This lack of familiarity may limit a sense of curiosity and confidence to explore all that NJ's natural spaces have to offer. Yet, this barrier is one that can be broken with intentional and inclusive marketing. To increase comfort levels, DEP

can educate communities on the logistical details of how to navigate the state's natural resources (including cost, parking, and what to bring), highlight examples of the types of activities that are offered in the space (like hiking, kayaking, fishing), and detail resources that will be available (like rental equipment, bathrooms, and staff guides). Knowledge of what to expect before arriving to a new outdoor space will help all first-time visitors to get acclimated quicker.

Lastly, while DEP explores branding and marketing campaigns for its parks programs, campaigns in multiple languages should be conducted to better engage with the diverse communities across the state and especially within OBCs.

PRIORITY 5: STUDY, PLAN, AND MAKE POLICY





PRIORITY 5 STUDY, PLAN, AND MAKE POLICY



Above photo: Attendees at the Middlesex County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in June 2023.

As part of the Department’s mission to improve and protect public health, safety, and the environment, DEP uses guiding principles of following the law and using the best available science to ensure its priorities are met. As the Department conducts research, collects and provides data and engages in planning exercises to make sound policies, ensuring OBCs are prioritized is imperative.

HOW DOES RESEARCH, DATA, AND PLANNING INFORM DEP’S POLICIES AND DECISIONS?

Research, data management, and planning are critical tools used by DEP to ensure that policy decisions improve and protect human health, safety, and the environment. The agency plans for the protection of the state’s health and environment by analyzing current and future threats and creating plans to mitigate its impacts. DEP also makes multiple

planning, data tools, and resources available to the public. Programs across the agency set policy through institutionalizing its respective operations, initiatives, and priorities. Planning and research are conducted by every program with support and leadership from the Division of Science and Research and the Office of Environmental & Public Health Analysis.

SUMMARY OF GOALS AND ACTIONS

GOAL 5.1

Institutionalize Data Accessibility, Transparency, and EJ Inclusive Research Priorities

TEAM: DEP

ACTIONS

TIME FRAME

5.1.1 Collaborate across agency for inclusive data management, transparency, and accessibility

L

5.1.2 Identify data and research gaps impacting OBCs and prioritize research and data collection to address gaps

M

5.1.3 Improve public interface and accessibility of data tools, resources, and research

L

GOAL 5.2

Ensure Equity in Planning Processes

TEAM: DEP, OCR

ACTIONS

TIME FRAME

5.2.1 Guarantee early and meaningful involvement of OBCs in planning processes.

M

5.2.2 Secure resources and support for local governments to integrate EJ planning at the local level

L

5.2.3 Include the OBC layer in all planning and mapping tools to prioritize EJ considerations

S

GOAL 5.3

Institutionalize EJ in Policies and Procedures

TEAM: DEP, CIER

ACTIONS

TIME FRAME

5.3.1 Audit SOPs to integrate EJ considerations, including enhanced meaningful public participation opportunities

M

5.3.2 Implement a standardized EJ analysis process for major policy decisions that consider disproportionate stressor impacts, community engagement, and equitable deployment of resources and benefits

M

5.3.3 Incorporate analysis of risks and benefits to OBCs in DEP decisions

S

O

TIME FRAME

Short-term

S

Medium-term

M

Long-term

L

Ongoing

O

Below photo: Advocates share information about a proposed park project in Jersey City with Commissioner LaTourette and EJ Director Kandyce Perry during a site tour before the Hudson County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in October 2023.



HOW DOES RESEARCH, DATA, AND PLANNING INFORM DEP'S POLICIES AND DECISIONS?

(Continued)

DATA AND PLANNING TOOLS

DEP has developed and maintains planning and data tools, many of which are publicly available. The Office of Environmental & Public Health Analysis coordinates data and develops tools to show health impacts from environmental issues. Many other groups within DEP also contribute to planning and data tools, including the Bureau of Geographic Information Systems which maintains [DEP Open Data](#) platform.

PLANNING

DEP engages in broad, agency-wide planning to address New Jersey's most pressing environmental challenges through integrated, science-based strategies. DEP's planning functions span air and water quality, water supply management, waste management, land use, and environmental justice integration— ensuring that policies are forward-looking and inclusive. There is a particular focus on planning to mitigate and adapt to climate risks via statewide climate change resilience strategies and action plans, including flood resilience reports, the strategic climate action plan, the energy master plan, extreme heat resilience action plan, and support to develop regional and local climate resilience plans. These planning efforts are coordinated across divisions and informed by initiatives like NJPACT (Protecting Against Climate Threats), a regulatory reform effort to help reduce greenhouse gas and other climate pollutant emissions while making our natural and built environments more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

POLICY

DEP's policies are decisions that govern the actions of those that the agency regulates and the actions of the agency itself. Policy decisions range from those that are set by others like the NJ Legislature to decisions that are set internally by agency leadership. For example, statutes passed by the NJ Legislature are implemented by DEP through rules that are codified in the New Jersey Administrative Code (NJAC). DEP rules can span across every program and must incorporate a public comment opportunity before the rule is formally proposed and eventually adopted. The final rule becomes a new policy by which regulated entities must abide. Policy decisions may not always take the form of codified rules through the NJAC but can be codified nonetheless via Commissioner's executive order. Lastly, some policy decisions cover how agency staff must operate, including in the form of human resource policies or standard operating procedures set by program leadership.

RESEARCH

DEP conducts scientific research to inform policy development, ensuring that decisions are based on sound science. Multiple programs engage in research, data collection and analysis. The Division of Science and Research (DSR) is the lead research arm, engaged in setting environmental standards, producing periodic environmental trends reports, issuing fish consumption advisories, conducting risk analysis, and analyzing ongoing and emerging environmental challenges such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) known as "forever chemicals", lead and mercury exposure, and climate change threats.



Above photo: A community member speaks at the Union County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in February 2022.

CURRENT STRATEGIES

It is important not to lose sight of best practices in which the Department is already delivering justice as we study, plan, and make policy. These best practices are strengths that can be replicated within other applicable areas of the Department.

RESILIENT NJ

Established to address climate resilience and environmental justice, Resilient NJ focuses on developing regional resilience plans for areas prone to climate impacts, particularly in OBCs. The initiative facilitates collaboration between local governments, community organizations, and residents to identify vulnerabilities and develop strategies to mitigate climate risks. Resilient NJ emphasizes community-driven planning processes, ensuring that the voices of historically marginalized communities are central in crafting solutions. The program prioritizes projects that not only enhance climate resilience but also align with environmental justice principles by improving the quality of life and reducing environmental burdens in OBCs.

PRIORITIZING EJ IN PLANNING

Many DEP programs prioritize the needs of EJ communities in planning strategies.

Climate Resilience Planning Guidance for Municipalities

The Office of Climate Resilience has integrated social vulnerability data and community engagement best practices into climate resilience guidance for municipalities. This ensures that municipalities are

also planning with environmental and climate justice in mind, addressing the specific vulnerabilities and needs of EJ communities. DEP commissioned Rutgers University to develop [A Seat at the Table](#) project, which is a set of decision-support tools, resilience planning guidance, and training and policy options to advance efforts to address the needs of socially vulnerable populations as part of coastal climate resilience planning. Final products include a [report](#) with policy options, a [training](#) for local resilience planners, and availability of data on socially vulnerable populations that can be found on the [NJADAPT suite of tools](#).

Water Supply Plan Update

DEP integrated environmental concerns into the [2024 New Jersey Statewide Water Supply Plan](#) by holding both virtual and in-person public meetings and accepted written comments to ensure that overburdened communities had opportunities to participate in shaping the Plan. An interactive [“Story Map” website](#) was developed to present key information in a user-friendly format tailored to different audiences, including EJ communities. The Plan also addresses how climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations and incorporates these concerns into regional planning and resilience strategies. To ensure the affordability

and safety of water for OBCs, the 2024 New Jersey Statewide Water Supply Plan promotes infrastructure upgrades, water loss audits, and equitable investment in historically underserved areas. It also emphasizes monitoring for emerging contaminants and improving data transparency to empower communities with information about their water quality and costs.

MAPPING AND PLANNING TOOLS AND REPORTS

DEP has developed the following tools that provide valuable information about and for OBCs.

Environmental Justice Mapping, Assessment, and Protection Tool (EJMAP): A tool that allow users to examine existing environmental and public health stressors in the State’s OBCs and supports the analysis

required under the Environmental Justice Rules and for use in prioritizing EJ issues in planning and policy-making.

What’s in My Community Air Quality Mapping

Application: Allows residents to view air quality data specific to their communities, supporting informed decision-making and advocacy.

Potential Lead Exposure Mapping (PLEM): Identifies areas at risk for lead exposure, enabling targeted interventions to improve and protect public health.

DEP Urban Heat Island Effect and Land Surface

Temperature in New Jersey: Provides data on urban heat islands to inform climate resilience planning, particularly in EJ communities.

GOALS, CHALLENGES, AND ACTIONS

Drawing on the challenges and opportunities revealed through the EJ assessment process, the following goals and actions aim to advance environmental justice through the Department’s data management, research, planning, and policy initiatives.

GOAL 5.1: INSTITUTIONALIZE DATA TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESSIBILITY, AND EJ INCLUSIVE RESEARCH PRIORITIES

DEP is a large agency that collects, generates, and manages a vast amount of data to set policies, make informed decisions, ensure accountability and transparency, and conduct overall daily business. Like any private or public organization, DEP’s data is one of its most important strategic assets as it plays a pivotal role in the Department’s ability to fulfill its mission. DEP’s ability to manage, coordinate, and leverage decades worth of data is critical in the modern, data-driven world. However, like many government institutions, DEP is not exempt from the data quality

and data sharing issues that hampers data analysis to support policy decisions and data transparency with the public. The lack of quality data can result in the inability to periodically assess programs for continual improvement.

The need for consistent data management is multiplied as the Department faces an increasing number of cross-programmatic issues, such as climate change, environmental justice, and widespread emerging contamination such as PFAS. Further, inconsistent, orphaned, and/or poorly managed data sets will prevent the Department from leveraging newer technologies like AI to improve our response to evolving issues and public needs. It is essential that DEP programs work together with shared data standards and a culture that prioritizes and values reliably accessible data.

A department-wide strategy for improved data governance and management could be particularly beneficial for EJ outcomes. EJ advocates have consistently highlighted data accessibility and transparency as crucial for their communities. Better data management can include department-wide collaborations to assess the various formats and places in which data with relevance to EJ communities is currently stored and how to make it more uniform and accessible. DEP should also engage in gap analyses to identify if data on environmental quality indicators particularly relevant to OBCs is

missing and assess if our current data collection is inclusive of OBCs or geographically biased in any way. Such analyses should guide DEP's agenda to research the items on which more information is needed. In developing research agendas, programs should consider gaps in issues that are particularly relevant to OBCs – e.g. incinerators are very specific to being primarily located in and impacting OBCs. The assessment of EJ-related data and research needs should be informed by direct communication with OBCs and organizations that represent their needs.

Finally, DEP should continue to prioritize data accessibility and assess how to make public data tools more user-friendly and intuitive for EJ communities to use. This includes ensuring DEP's research is publicly accessible, such as through publicly posted research summaries. All data governance strategies and more can be led by a Chief Data Officer that the Department hires.

GOAL 5.2: ENSURE EQUITY IN PLANNING PROCESSES

Whether it relates to municipal zoning codes that collocates industry adjacent to residential neighborhoods, federal transportation projects that historically bifurcated communities, or state initiatives that ignored disproportionate impacts, planning has not always prioritized the needs of EJ communities. Past decisions may not have considered or fully addressed their unique challenges.

DEP can explore how to integrate principles of participatory planning processes that empower residents, especially those in OBCs. The Department can collaborate with OBCs to co-develop priorities, allocate resources, and shape environmental policies. This will enhance internal planning efforts and external planning resources by incorporating EJ considerations. This includes bringing EJ communities into the planning process in the early stages and ensuring their needs are prioritized throughout each stage.

Climate resilience planning will continue to be a crucial tool to protect all communities, particularly OBCs, from emerging environmental risks. DEP can ensure that its internal planning complements and assists local planning efforts and ensures ease of implementation for county and municipal governments. A key part of equitable climate resilience planning is ensuring that DEP's strategies for flood and shore protection focus on addressing challenges that plague many OBCs such as legacy contamination or underground storage tanks. Both of which are sources of community exposure and subject to contaminant migration during flooding events and thus can benefit from being remediated during the planning of flood mitigation projects.

DEP can also provide support to local flood plain managers about improving resilience and prioritizing flood mitigation measures. These managers that serve OBCs should be encouraged, and if possible required,

Below photo: Commissioner Latourette, Director Kandyce Perry, and EPA Region 2 Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor for Equity Olivia Glenn listen to community comments at the Somerset County Environmental Justice Community Engagement session in Bound Brook in December 2023.



to attend training provided by the Bureau of Flood Engineering for National Flood Insurance Program implementation. This support and assistance can ensure local residents are best protected and served by DEP regulations and resources and that there are collaboration and coordination from the state to the municipal level.

This is key because at the municipal level, OBCs often face limited budgets and staffing capacity. Providing resources to assist them in local planning efforts alleviates these issues. This assistance can include understanding how to navigate updated land use guidelines and special coastal management areas as well as grant opportunities and stipulations.

Following severe weather events, many low-income communities do not have the financial resources to relocate or make resilience-based upgrades to their homes, returning to ill-prepped homes and facing perpetual challenges as future disasters occur due to climate change. These communities are inhibited from planning for the future with emergency preparedness and resiliency in mind due to many systemic factors that may be outside of DEP's control. Local officials and municipalities in resource-constrained OBCs may also have less technical capacity and planning staff to engage with and utilize available planning resources.

Apart from providing technical assistance and planning support, ensuring that data needs meet planning needs is vital. DEP's many planning and mapping tools should incorporate the OBC layer to guide decision-making. Since the development of EJMAP, the OBC layer has been added to many DEP mapping tools and the data is used to inform decision-making. However, other tools and processes have yet to incorporate OBC data. For example, the [Natural Resource Restoration Project Explorer](#) tool could add an OBC layer to better inform the process for reaching natural resource damage settlements. For degraded waters prioritization, OBC data can be overlaid with water quality assessments to identify areas of compounded vulnerability. Incorporating an environmental justice weighting factor into the ranking methodology and integrating community impact data such as health assessments and local concerns would ensure that prioritization reflects both scientific data and the lived experiences of affected residents.

GOAL 5.3: INSTITUTIONALIZE EJ IN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Across its environmental quality and natural resource management portfolios, DEP makes a litany of routine decisions in both regulatory and non-regulatory settings. These decisions range from evaluating facility siting and operations for permitting, to authorizing extractive uses of natural resources such as allocating water supply resources, to conducting research on emerging issues of public health and environmental concern, to establishing best management practices for the maintenance of natural areas, to funding the restoration of and access to a myriad of natural and historic resources.

As DEP makes decisions, the agency considers potential externalities, unintended consequences, and gaps in serving public needs. Across the hundreds of decision-making processes, DEP must continue to ensure that environmental justice considerations remain a decided part of the decision-making processes where EJ has already been integrated and that EJ becomes a point of consideration in processes where it has not yet been integrated. These can be achieved through continual process improvement and routinely revisiting existing policies to calibrate their contents to ensure maximal application for the benefit of all New Jersey communities, including those with environmental justice concerns.

Such work of continual process and policy improvement could include, for example, integrating and institutionalizing an analysis of potential disproportionate impacts beyond the finite applicability of the EJ Law in certain, but limited, permitting contexts. In some cases, it may be appropriate to integrate disproportionate impact analysis as one of many considerations that inform a decision, such as considering the potential for disproportionate adverse impacts upon OBCs in the socioeconomic impact analysis required in rulemaking processes. In other cases, it may be appropriate to utilize disproportionate impact analysis as part of prioritization frameworks within new and existing Department workstreams. Irrespective of the decision-making, the Department must in all cases be attuned to the potential that, without a formal process, policy, or methodology to address particularized risks to communities



Above photo: Commissioner Latourette and Director Kandyce Perry join Senator Cory Booker and Environmental Justice advocates on a tour of the Ironbound neighborhood in Newark in 2021.

with environmental justice concerns, OBCs may be unintentionally left out in the policy and decision-making process.

For the Department to adopt EJ as a long-lasting and consistent approach, it will need to be systematically integrated into the policies and procedures that enable the agency to make decisions. There is currently variation across the Department on how to incorporate EJ considerations into their operations, including methods to incorporate meaningful public participation and mitigate disparate impacts affecting OBCs. One key method that normally helps to address uniformity in processes is standard operating procedures (SOPs), which are used across all programs. Some SOPs have been updated to include EJ formally, while some programs have done the work to integrate EJ only into one-time programmatic activities. Without a clear SOP, variation will continue leading to inconsistency and confusion, and one-off EJ programmatic activities can be dismantled or dismissed easily.

Several opportunities can be explored to better institutionalize EJ within the Department's policies and procedures. To address inconsistency and ensure long-lasting permanence, SOPs can be audited and revised to identify areas for EJ integration. SOPs can include the identification and evaluation of disproportionate environmental, public health, and economic impacts to OBCs to direct the program's decision-making about which communities to

prioritize and how impacts can be avoided. Guidelines can also be incorporated for enhanced public participation to ensure the voices of OBCs are a consistent priority in decision-making processes. SOPs can also help ensure that EJ is incorporated into every planning process, removing the opportunity for varying and inconstant levels of EJ considerations.

DEP can consider specifically incorporating environmental justice metrics—such as cumulative impacts, and the distribution of environmental and public health benefits into existing decision-making methodologies to ensure that proposed Department actions are evaluated for their environmental equity implications in overburdened communities. DEP can adapt existing tools—such as the compliance checklist, EJMAP, and facility-wide risk assessment guidance used during the EJ Rule process—for use in broader policy and programmatic decisions. These tools can be integrated into cost-benefit and regulatory analyses to ensure consistent, data-informed evaluation of how proposed actions affect OBCs.

APPENDIX



DEP PROGRAMMATIC STRUCTURE

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is organized into several major programs, each with distinct responsibilities. At the time of this Plan's release, this includes seven divisions reporting to assistant commissioners and multiple offices reporting to the commissioner.

Air, Energy & Materials Sustainability (AEMS) improves and protects human health and the environment from all air contaminants, including those that cause climate change, to protect the public from unnecessary radiation exposure, and to manage and regulate solid waste. The Program consists of five divisions:

- **The Division of Air Quality and Radiation Protection (DAQRP)** ensures healthy air, for both public health, safety, and the environment and to protect the public and radiation workers from unnecessary exposure to radiation. These two goals are managed through regulation, planning, inspection, and permitting for sources of air pollution and radiation exposures.
- **The Division of Climate Change Mitigation and Monitoring** includes several distinct objectives: Mitigate climate change by developing strategies to decarbonize all sectors of New Jersey's economy, support research to evaluate and promote clean and resilient energy systems and sustainable environmental practices; Prevent the release of hazardous substances and prevent chemical incidents through the implementation of risk assessment and best safety practices.
- **The Division of Air Enforcement** ensures that New Jersey's air is clean, safe, enjoyable, and maintained for future generations. This mission is achieved by enforcing regulatory requirements of the New Jersey State Air Pollution and Federal Clean Air Acts.
- **The Division of Sustainable Waste Management** is dedicated to the environmentally sound, cost effective, and sustainable management of solid and hazardous wastes and recyclable materials, to protect public health, preserve the environment, and enhance the quality of life for the citizens of the State of New Jersey.
- **The Division of Waste and Underground Storage Compliance and Enforcement** promotes and ensures regulatory compliance with waste handling and disposal rules through education, inspection, investigation, audit, licensure, registration, permitting and enforcement actions as part of DEP's mission to protect environmental quality and public health, and create vibrant, sustainable communities.

Community Investment & Economic Revitalization (CIER) promotes, demonstrates and coordinate the intersection of economic, social, and environmental systems within New Jersey communities, to facilitate environmental improvement and responsible and resilient economic growth while improving the quality of life for our NJ communities. CIER has the following subprograms:

- **The Historic Preservation Office** assists the residents of New Jersey in identifying, preserving, protecting, and sustaining our historic and archaeological resources through the implementation of the state's comprehensive historic preservation plan.
- **Community and Local Government Assistance** is the direct link between DEP and all municipal, county, and local governments. It works collaboratively with the jurisdictions to address concerns, provide information on grants and loans, keep local officials updated with information on matters specific to their towns, and coordinating meetings between the towns and agency personnel; with the goal of bringing a resolution to any problems or concerns.
- **The Division of Green Acres'** mission is to achieve, in partnership with others, a system of interconnected open spaces the protection of which will preserve and enhance New Jersey's natural environment and its historic, scenic, and recreational resources for public use and enjoyment.

Photo to the left: Advocates from East Trenton Collaborative guide DEP staff on a walking tour of the East Trenton neighborhood prior to the Mercer County Environmental Justice Community Engagement Session in June 2024.

- **The Office of Natural Resource Restoration (ONRR)** responds to discharges and other sources of pollution that trigger DEP’s obligations as the trustee for all of New Jersey’s natural resources. This effort includes working with the people responsible for conducting the remediation to return such natural resources to their pre-discharge quality, quantity, function, and value, and to implement restoration projects to compensate New Jersey citizens for the lost interim value or for the permanent loss of their natural resources.
- **Economic Analysis & Development** assists with regulatory impact analysis of new rule proposals, advises staff on economic issues, and develops original research to support the Department’s mission.

Contaminated Site Remediation & Redevelopment (CSSR) reduces the number of contaminated sites in New Jersey to ensure the protection of public health, safety, and the environment and ready sites for redevelopment. The Program also implements response actions at contaminated sites where the party responsible for the contamination is unknown, unwilling, or unable to perform the necessary actions. The program consists of the following divisions:

- **Division of Remediation Management** oversees or performs the remediation of contaminated sites, by applying sound science and best professional judgment to implement remedies that are protective of public health and safety and the environment.
- **Division of Enforcement and Financial Operations** provides consistent, reliable assistance regarding enforcement actions and financial matters to ensure that remedies are protective of public health and safety and the environment.
- **Division of Environmental Evaluation & Remediation Review** provides technical support for complex remediation projects to ensure that projects are adequately reviewed and permitted for the protection of public health and safety.

Fish & Wildlife protects and manages the State’s fish and wildlife to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic values for all New Jerseyans. Fish & Wildlife includes the following subprograms:

- **Wildlife Management & Fresh Water Fisheries Administrator** oversees the protection, propagation, and management of New Jersey’s freshwater fish and wildlife resources, including habitat conservation, fish stocking, and promoting recreational use of these natural assets.
- **Conservation Police** patrol the state and its waters using the latest in law enforcement technology as well as traditional methods to enforce laws and regulations that protect wildlife and its habitat.
- **Central Services Administration**, also known as the Bureau of Business Administration, manages financial operations, grants, GIS systems, environmental reviews, and licensing systems to support the daily functions and mission of Fish and Wildlife in New Jersey.
- **Marine Fisheries Administration**, comprised of two bureaus—the Bureau of Marine Fisheries and the Bureau of Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries—is charged with managing the State’s marine fish and shellfish resources, their habitats, and the commercial and recreational fisheries reliant upon them.
- **Habit, Access & Endangered Species Administration** actively conserves New Jersey’s biological diversity by maintaining and enhancing rare, endangered, threatened and nongame wildlife populations within healthy, functioning ecosystems and works with many partners to protect and improve habitat, whether on state lands or properties in private ownership. Several programs are available for financial and/or technical assistance to private landowners who want to improve habitat on their properties.

State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites (SPFHS) provide equitable and responsible access for present and future generations to the state’s natural, historic and recreational resources. Through the implementation of best practices in stewardship, education, interpretation, law enforcement and forest protection we ensure the conservation, protection and understanding of these resources. The program consists of the following organizational areas:

- **Office of the Chief of Operations** encompasses the Office of Communications, Interpretation & Education, Information Technology and GIS Services and support, Human Resources and regulatory reviews, all of which support the programs and operations within SPFHS.
- **State Park Administrator** provides the administration, operation, maintenance, interpretation, and conservation of recreational, natural, cultural and historic resources across New Jersey’s network of State Parks, ensuring for safe, enjoyable, recreational and educational use by the public. The State Park Service focuses on the traditional State Parks in the northern, central and southern regions of the state.
- **Urban State Parks & Initiatives** works to expand the State Park Service’s, offerings, leadership and engagement in green spaces for outdoor recreation, climate resilience, conservation of natural resources, and human health throughout New Jersey’s urban areas. Current areas of focus include development of the Greenway in Essex and Hudson County and the development of new amenities in Liberty State Park.
- **State Historic Sites Administrator** provides the administration, operation, maintenance, interpretation, and conservation of cultural and historic resources within the State Park Service’s portfolio of historic resources. Specifically, this includes the acquisition, maintenance, restoration, preservation, curation, and interpretation of historic sites and cultural resources.
- **State Park Police** ensure a safe experience for visitors while protecting the natural, cultural and historic resources of New Jersey’s state parks forests and historic sites. State Park Police are responsible for processing and investigating all criminal and environmental crimes which occur on the program’s lands and are frequently called on to provide support to collaborating agencies in instances of search and rescue and missing persons.
- **Forests & Natural Lands** is comprised of the Forest Service, Forest Fire Service, and the Office of Natural Lands Management. The Forest Service ensures the proper stewardship of New Jersey’s approximately two-million acres of forest land, supporting public and private landowners throughout the state and working closely with the State Park Service on management of forests within the state park and forest network. The Forest Fire Service ensures the protection of life and property from wildfire throughout New Jersey and works to manage some of the nation’s most volatile fuel types found in the pineland region. The Office of Natural Lands Management administers a group of interrelated land management and planning programs, including the Natural Heritage Program, the Natural Areas Program and provides staff support to the NJ Natural Lands Trust.
- **The Office of Resource Development** supports the State Park, Forest & Historic Sites and Fish & Wildlife programs capital development needs. Specifically, this includes advancing site-specific projects and working closely with the Department of Treasury’s Division of Property Management and Construction in the management of capital improvement projects.

Water Resources Management (WRM) protects water resources through effective and balanced implementation of environmental laws and regulations. Concerns specific to overburdened communities are addressed to reduce environmental stressors, increase environmental and public health benefits, increase monitoring, increase communication and outreach, including fostering relationships, and increase funding opportunities to overburdened communities. The program consists of the following divisions:

- **Division of Water Supply & Geoscience (DWSG)** ensures New Jersey has adequate, reliable, safe and sustainable water for current and future needs, users and the environment. DWSG regulates ground and surface water diversions and associated infrastructure for drinking water, agriculture and aquaculture industry, irrigation, and other uses while providing drinking water financial, licensing and training support. DWSG collects, analyzes and maps geologic, hydrologic and quality data to support permit decisions, provide for planning for long-term water availability, minimize impacts from droughts and other emergencies and work with interstate agencies.

- **Division of Water Quality (DWQ)** is responsible for protecting New Jersey’s ground and surface water quality by assuring the proper treatment and discharge of wastewater, the proper monitoring, management and disposal of sludge and sludge derived products from domestic and industrial systems; and the proper permitting and management of stormwater. DWQ has the lead Department role in administering the Environmental Infrastructure Financing Program which offers low interest financing for the planning, design, and/or construction of wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater management infrastructure.
- **Division of Water Enforcement (DWE)** ensures compliance with the State’s water programs, while placing particular focus on inspections of wastewater discharge and community drinking water supply facilities: provides compliance assistance; investigates complaints and notifications of unauthorized activities; conducts inspections; issues enforcement documents, which may include assessed penalties for the Water Allocation Program, the Well Drillers Program, the Water Supply and Wastewater Licensing Act, and State-certified laboratories that fail to comply with the certification program requirements; assists the Attorney General in developing enforcement cases and testifies in court; negotiates compliance schedules and penalty settlements.
- **Division of Water Monitoring, Standards, and Pesticide Control (DWMS)** conducts statewide ambient water quality monitoring (biological and chemical) and analyzes laboratory data of fresh and marine waters for a sound technical basis about water resource decision making. The program develops water quality standards, which are used to assess, protect, and restore New Jersey’s water resources. The DWMS also enforces the State code and Federal requirements related to the use, sale, distribution, and manufacture of pesticides in NJ. The implementation of the Division’s rules and programs, including communication of the monitoring data and information, is critical to ensure NJ’s waters are safe for swimming and recreation, fish and shellfish are safe to eat, water sources can be used for drinking, aquatic life is healthy, and, overall, the protection of public health and safety.

Watershed and Land Management (WLM)’s mission is to preserve, protect and improve the integrity of New Jersey’s water and land-based natural resources, while protecting life and property from environmental threats. The program has the following subprograms:

- **State Floodplain Administrator** oversees the state’s flood management activities, including compliance with floodplain regulations such as the state’s Flood Hazard Area Control Act (FHACA).
- **Division of Land Resource Protection (LRP)** develops, implements, and enforces regulatory programs intended to protect New Jersey’s land-based resources, including those within the state’s coastal zone, freshwater and coastal wetlands, waterfronts, and flood hazard areas. The Division is also responsible for the development and promulgation of land resource protection rules and regulations, coordination of federal consistency reviews and federal program reporting pursuant to the federal Coastal Zone Management Act, and education and outreach initiatives that correspond to the foregoing.
- **Division of Watershed Protection and Restoration** develops and implements programs intended to promote watershed stewardship, restoration, and impact mitigation. The Division also manages stormwater management permitting programs, water quality management planning, water quality restoration grants, watershed education and outreach initiatives, and the use of the State’s tidelands resources.
- **Resilience Engineering and Construction** is comprised of the **Office of Coastal Engineering** and the **Office of Dam Safety and Flood Engineering** to further Watershed and Land Management’s goal of ameliorating the catastrophic effects of flooding that so many communities across the State regularly experience.

Commissioner’s Office’s mission is to establish high-level policy priorities in accordance with the Governor and coordinate decision-making across the agency. The Commissioner’s Office consists of the following organizational areas:

The Chief of Staff oversees the following subprograms:

- **Division of Science & Research (DSR)** provides scientific and technical information in support of policy development. The Division provides expertise, information, research, analysis, and quality assurance as it relates to the science that supports the Department.
- **Office of Communications and Outreach** coordinates and manages the Department’s press, social media, events, graphics, environmental education, and constituent relations functions. The Office manages the Department’s external and internal communications and works to promote the Administration’s and Department’s priorities and accomplishments strategically and proactively.
- **Office of Emergency Management (OEM)**’s mission is to ensure the safety of the people of New Jersey and protect the environment during all-hazards emergency situations, support the network of DEP first responders and law enforcement, and serve as a first point of contact for DEP’s constituents to report environmental concerns through the DEP Environmental Action Hotline, all on a 24/7/365 basis.
- **Office of Permitting and Project Navigation**, which provides coordination for the permitting and review of complex multi-media, high value, or multi-agency projects including [National Environmental Policy Act \(NEPA\)](#) and [State Executive Order #215](#) reviews.

The Deputy Commissioner oversees the following two offices:

- **Office of Legislative Affairs** is responsible for aiding the Commissioner, Governor’s office, Federal, office and Legislature through the dissemination of information, coordinating meetings, conducting site visits, organizing, and attending conferences and conducting research on issues related to DEP and legislative matters. The Office assists in the resolution of problems and concerns between legislative entities and the Department.
- **Office of Environmental Public Health & Safety** administers and supports the Department’s environmental and public health programs and initiatives (e.g., environmental justice and health equity and climate change) by providing quality data, geospatial analysis and support tools to highlight and inform policy decisions about the connections between environmental hazards and public health and safety.

The Chief Advisor oversees the following offices:

- **Legal, Regulatory, and Enforcement Policy** develops and coordinates enforcement policies across all programs and assisting program enforcement of environmental laws by addressing current and historic violations and impacts of illegal conduct, while seeking redress through litigation efforts as liaison with the Division of Law (DOL).
- **Office of Legal Affairs** furthers the Commissioner’s initiatives and supports and assists program goals through regulatory, legal, and legislative means.
- **Office of Transactions & Public Land Administration** manages real estate transactions, legal agreements, and compliance for state-owned lands, supports land acquisitions, and ensures stewardship of properties funded through public conservation programs like Green Acres.
- **Office of Dispute Resolution** facilitates the resolution of environmental disputes by offering mediation and alternative dispute resolution services between the Department and regulated parties, aiming to resolve issues such as permit decisions, compliance matters, and enforcement actions without litigation.
- **Affirmative Litigation Support/(LSRP Licensed Site Remediation Professionals) Board/Bureau of Local Environmental Management and Right to Know (BLEMRTK)** supports environmental protection through legal action, professional oversight of site remediation, and coordination with local governments on environmental health and safety. It ensures compliance with

environmental laws, promotes transparency through public right-to-know initiatives, and maintains professional standards for site cleanup across New Jersey.

Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion promotes and fosters an inclusive environment that embraces diversity and views differences as positive values and will advance the Department of Environmental Protection's objective of having a workforce that reflects, at all levels, the communities it serves; sustain and enhance a positive, inclusive, and professional work environment; and achieve diversity in all programs and at all management levels of DEP that reflects the diversity of the State of New Jersey.

Office of Climate Resilience (OCR), led by the Chief Resilience Officer (CRO), provides and coordinates uniform and comprehensive planning and technical support to communities to increase New Jersey's resilience to climate change. The CRO oversees two subprograms:

- **Climate Resilience Planning** oversees New Jersey's Coastal Management Program, development and implementation of the Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy, coordination of the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience, and is responsible for coordinating with DEP policies, programs, and activities to plan for the impacts and the associated hazards of climate change and promote public awareness of climate change science.
- **Blue Acres** purchases flood-prone properties giving homeowners the option to sell Sandy-damaged homes at pre-storm value in flood-prone areas.

Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) encourages and maintains a culture at DEP that promotes and implements environmental justice so that disproportional environmental and public health impacts on overburdened communities (OBCs) are mitigated, environmental benefits are provided, barriers to participation in government decision-making opportunities are removed, and community feedback is heard and incorporated.

Management & Budget (M&B), led by the Chief Financial & Operations Officer, provides support, guidance and resources to DEP in order to ensure that the Department is best able to achieve the Commissioner's priorities and meet applicable legal mandates. The program consists of the following divisions and offices:

- **Division of Budget and Financial Operations** ensures that the fiscal resources of the Department are aligned to the greatest extent possible with the mission of the Department, ensures fiscal accountability, and delivers fiscal and administrative support to DEP and its external customers.
- **Division of Information Technology** supports the operational goals of the Department through the acquisition, development, use, and support of technologies and information systems and provides efficient exchange of data with internal and external stakeholders.
- **Division of Human Resources** attracts and retains a diverse, productive, and progressive workforce to support the principles and priorities of the Department.
- **Division of Health, Safety and Facilities Management** ensures the safety of employees through its management of facilities, equipment, and vehicles.
- **Office of Equal Opportunity and Public Contract Assistance** maintains an environment that promotes equal employment opportunity and equal access to the benefits of employment for all employees and to ensure that socially and economically disadvantaged businesses have an opportunity to compete for construction and procurement contracts.

KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Administrative Order (AO): A legal directive issued by a government agency to compel compliance with regulations or laws. It can be used to order corrective actions, cease illegal activities, or impose penalties.

Community Collaborative Initiative (CCI): A partnership model used by DEP to bring state agencies, local governments and communities together to tackle complex environmental, social and economic challenges.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): Organizations that are established, operated, and maintained by members of a community to meet local needs and address community issues.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP): The state agency responsible for protecting and managing New Jersey’s natural resources and improving and protecting public health, safety, and the environment. Also referred to as New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department.

DEP Programs:

- **AEMS:** Air, Energy & Materials Sustainability
- **CCMUA:** Camden County Municipal Utilities Authority
- **CIER:** Community Investment & Economic Revitalization
- **CSSR:** Contaminated Site Remediation & Redevelopment
- **DAQRP:** Division of Air Quality and Radiation Protection
- **DOIT:** Division of Information Technology
- **DSR:** Division of Science & Research
- **DWE:** Division of Water Enforcement
- **DWMS:** Division of Water Monitoring, Standards & Pesticide Control
- **DWQ:** Division of Water Quality
- **DWSG:** Division of Water Supply & Geoscience

- **DOH (New Jersey):** Department of Health
- **DOL (New Jersey):** Division of Law
- **EPHA:** Environmental & Public Health Analysis
- **LRLA:** Legal and Regulatory Affairs
- **M&B:** Management & Budget
- **OCR:** Office of Climate Resilience
- **ODE&I:** Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
- **OEM:** Office of Emergency Management
- **OEP:** Office of Enforcement Policy
- **OLA:** Office of Legislative Affairs
- **ONRR:** Office of Natural Resource Restoration
- **OPPN:** Office of Permitting & Project Navigation
- **SPHFS:** State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites
- **WLM:** Watershed & Land Management
- **WRM:** Water Resources Management

DEP DataMiner: An online portal or database maintained by the DEP that provides the public with access to the state’s environmental data and records.

Disadvantaged Communities (DACs): Communities that face greater environmental and health risks and have limited capacity to address those issues.

Environmental Justice (EJ): The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, tribal affiliation, income, or disability with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Environmental Justice Action Plan (EJ Action Plan): A strategic framework for the DEP that outlines the steps and initiatives to address and promote environmental justice.

Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC): A council that provides advice and

recommendations to the DEP to address environmental justice issues, ensuring that all communities are protected from environmental hazards.

Environmental Justice Initial Assessment

(EJIA): An internal assessment by the DEP to identify gaps, challenges and opportunities for advancing environmental justice through its work.

Environmental Justice Interagency Council

(EJIC): An interagency council to coordinate environmental justice efforts across New Jersey's state agencies.

Environmental Justice Mapping, Assessment, and Protection Tool (EJMAP):

An interactive map that shows New Jersey' overburdened communities, major polluting facilities, and combined environmental and public health stressors in a given area.

Executive Order No. 23 (EO 23): An order issued by Governor Phil Murphy committing to ensure equal protection and a healthy environment for all New Jersey residents.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

(FEMA): A U.S. government agency responsible for coordinating the federal government's role in preparing for, mitigating, responding and recovering from all disasters and emergencies.

Flood Hazard Area Control Act (FHACA):

A New Jersey law (N.J.A.C. 7:13) aimed at regulating development and land use in flood prone areas to reduce flood risk and protect life and property.

Green Infrastructure: A strategically planned network of natural and engineered features that use plants and soil to enable stormwater to soak into soil near where they fall, or to be captured for beneficial reuse.

Illegal Dumping Camera Program (IDCP): A program by DEP's Community Collaborative Initiative (CCI) that uses remote surveillance cameras to monitor and deter illegal dumping of waste.

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Individuals who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards

(NAAQS): Standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for ambient air quality to protect public health and the environment.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP):

A program managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that provides flood insurance to property owners in participating communities.

Natural Resource Damages (NRD):

Compensation required for injuries to natural resources resulting from environmental contamination.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):

U.S. environmental law that requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions before making decisions.

New Jersey Administrative Code (NJAC): An official compilation of all rules adopted by state agencies in New Jersey, which have the force of law.

New Jersey Protection Against Climate

Threats (NJPACT): A regulatory initiative aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change in New Jersey through various protective measures and strategies.

New Jersey Technical Assistance Program

(NJTAP): A DEP initiative designed to provide technical assistance to communities identified as disadvantaged or overburdened to improve water infrastructure.

Notice of Violation (NOV): Formal communication from a regulatory body that signals an alleged failure to comply with laws, rules or regulations.

Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ): An office within DEP that promotes, facilitates, and implements strategies to further just environmental outcomes for all.

Overburdened Communities (OBCs): Defined in New Jersey’s Environmental Justice Law as a census block group in which: at least 35 percent of the households qualify as low-income households; at least 40 percent of the residents identify as minority or as members of a State recognized tribal community; or at least 40 percent of the households have limited English proficiency.

Request for Applications (RFA): A formal announcement issued by an organization to solicit applications for funding opportunities, typically for research or public service projects.

Request for Proposals (RFPs): A formal document issued by organizations to solicit bids from potential vendors or service providers for a project or service.

Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI): A cooperative market-based program by the states of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont aimed to cap and reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the power sector.

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS): A large, complex group of man-made chemicals used in a variety of products to make them resistant to water.

Potential Lead Exposure Mapping (PLEM): A geospatial tool used in New Jersey to identify areas where lead exposure is likely, often used to guide public health interventions.

Private Well Testing Act (PWTA): A New Jersey law that requires sellers and lessors of properties with private wells to test water for contaminants to ensure safe drinking water.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Detailed, written instructions to achieve uniformity in the performance of a specific function.

Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP): An environmentally beneficial project voluntarily undertaken by a violator as a condition of settling an enforcement action with the DEP.



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