

Environmental Justice Subcommittee

Draft Meeting Summary: October 23, 2024

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| EJ Subcommittee Members in Attendance:  Hon. Dave Snyder, Co-Chair  Hon. Kristin Mink, Co-Chair  Kenny Boddye, Prince William County  Hon. Tom Dernoga, Prince George's County  Julie Kimmel, ACPAC  Noble Smith, MDE  William Washburn, ACPAC  Additional Attendees:  Tauhirah Abdul-Matin, AECOM  Tad Aburn, EJAT  Wes Darden, Office of Councilmember Mink  Anthony David Jr., Empower DC  Jeanmarie Elican, DC Council  Gwendolin McRea, VA DEQ | COG Staff:   * Heidi Bonnaffon, COG DEP * Robert Christopher, COG DEP * Robert d’Abadie COG DTP * Jen Desimone, COG DEP * Jeff King, COG DEP * Sunil Kumar, COG DEP * Jane Posey, COG DTP |

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS, APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY, FOCUS AND PURPOSE OF MEETING – COMPLETE LIST, SCREENING CRITERIA AND PRIORITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Dave Snyder, Co-Chair

Co-chair Snyder called the meeting to order, introductions were given, prior meeting summary was approved.

1. public comment and engagement

Summary of the comments received:

1. **Phased Implementation**: Commenters have recommended a phased implementation for the Environmental Justice (EJ) action plan, similar to State Implementation Plans (SIPs). This initial phase would focus on straightforward, practical emissions reduction actions.
2. **Targeting Specific Areas**: There is a suggestion to utilize the University of Maryland’s version of EJ Screen, which is adapted for the DMV region, to pinpoint areas for action. This would be complemented by community-level emissions density maps for pollutants, using tools like the EPA’s AirTox Screen.
3. **Priority Strategies**: Public feedback has called for three immediate strategies:
   * Adopting cleaner technologies,
   * Enforcing stricter pollution controls, and
   * Addressing emissions from unpermitted sources.
4. **Permit Requirements**: There’s a push for all permits to include robust mitigation plans to safeguard against further health risks and reduce impacts on overburdened communities.
5. **Action Focus**: Commenters have emphasized the need for real-time actions, specifically on regulatory enforcement and utilizing existing data to protect vulnerable communities.

Following the summary, the floor was opened for additional comments from the public. Here is the summary of public comments.

1. **Acknowledgment**: Praise for MWAQC's progress and engagement with EJ communities.
2. **Phased Implementation**: Start with basic, effective emissions reduction actions in each jurisdiction.
3. **Targeting Areas**: Use Maryland's EJ Screen tool and emissions density maps to identify priority areas.
4. **Immediate Actions Needed**:
   * Enforce laws against illegal diesel truck idling.
   * Control dust emissions in EJ areas.
   * Increase oversight of businesses polluting in these areas.
5. **Resource Efficiency**: Suggests using Maryland's efficient enforcement tools to address resource limitations.
6. **MWAQC TAC Focus**: Urges TAC to prioritize urgent, data-driven EJ issues.
7. **Health and Climate Concerns**: Highlights cancer risks in EJ areas and calls for stronger climate goals aligned with local jurisdictions.
8. **Offer of Help**: Community support offered to speed up action on these issues.

**Accessibility Issue**: Another commenter requested easier access to meeting materials for better engagement, and MWAC staff agreed to address this.

1. DISCUSSION OF COMPLETE LIST, SCREENING CRITERIA AND PRIORITY STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

*MWAQC Staff, Co-chairs and Members*

Summary of the meeting presentation and discussion:

1. **Presentation of Proposed Actions**: The speaker presented six key strategies for improving air quality in environmental justice (EJ) communities, including:
   * Strengthening partnerships,
   * Enhancing air quality monitoring,
   * Tightening regulations,
   * Expanding outreach and education,
   * Reducing vehicle emissions,
   * Reducing emissions from stationary sources.
2. **Prioritization Criteria**: Actions were screened using criteria to ensure they benefit EJ communities, have a measurable impact, are feasible (technically, economically, and politically), and are supported by responsible agencies.
3. **Near-term and Long-term Priorities**:
   * **Near-term**: Focused on deploying air monitors in impacted neighborhoods, creating a community guide for air quality monitoring, enforcing diesel idling rules, and increasing compliance reviews.
   * **Long-term**: Considered strategies that may need policy changes, such as zoning amendments, EJ integration in state plans, and legislative initiatives.
4. **Public Comments and Considerations**:
   * Concerns were raised regarding how community monitoring can drive real change, given current gaps in monitoring versus community experience.
   * Requests to ensure any proposed actions would be impactful and legally recognized.
5. **Data Center Emissions**: Discussed the growing impact of data centers, particularly their backup diesel generators. Although not currently a top priority in EJ areas, the issue may become more relevant if data centers expand near these communities.
6. **Final Recommendations**:
   * Maintain a focus on enforcing existing regulations, especially around diesel idling.
   * Continue pursuing federal grants for cleaner fleet transitions.
   * Expand monitoring, especially hyperlocal, and ensure public transport systems include EJ communities.
   * Further discussions are needed on including health departments in partnerships and clarifying jurisdictional roles for enforcing air quality controls.

The session ended with plans to refine the list of actions based on today’s feedback, invite further input from the EJ subcommittee, and prepare for continued public engagement at future meetings.

1. COMMMITTE MEMBER DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC FEEDBACK/INPUT ON MEETING DISCUSSION

Subcommittee Co-Chair and Members, Interested Stakeholders and the Public

Here's a summary of the discussion and additional public comments:

1. **Call for Informal Meetings**: A suggestion was made to hold informal meetings with community groups, like the Cheverly area, DC Environmental Justice Coalition, and others, to gather more community input. These meetings were viewed as effective for engaging with busy community members.
2. **Proposed Strategies**:
   * **Moratorium on New Polluting Sources**: A controversial suggestion for a moratorium on large emitting sources in EJ areas, similar to New Jersey’s approach, was raised to prevent further environmental impacts on these communities.
   * **Addressing Zoning and Land Use**: Emphasis on the need to address zoning, which often leads to industrial areas near EJ communities. California’s model for zoning buffers was recommended for consideration as a long-term strategy.
   * **Health Department Involvement**: Including health departments in the planning was deemed critical to address cumulative exposures and health impacts in EJ communities.
3. **Cumulative Impacts and Criteria Pollutants**: Public commenters stressed that focusing only on criteria pollutants would overlook other harmful pollutants like diesel exhaust. Including a cumulative impacts analysis in environmental planning was recommended, especially if zoning reforms are challenging to implement.
4. **Funding for Monitoring Support Center**: It was suggested that COG pursue grants to fund an air monitoring support center or clearinghouse, leveraging federal Justice40 funding. This center could also coordinate with local universities on monitoring efforts.
5. **Prioritizing Diesel Emissions**: Diesel exhaust was identified as a top issue affecting EJ communities, with a specific recommendation for increased enforcement of diesel idling regulations.
6. **Environmental Justice in SIPs**: Commenters called for urgent integration of EJ considerations into State Implementation Plans (SIPs) due to their long-term implications, especially for comprehensive plans in DC. Concern was expressed that EJ is not currently a priority in these processes.
7. **Meeting Logistics**: The group discussed rescheduling November and December meetings due to holiday conflicts, with alternate dates to be proposed.

These comments underscored the importance of prioritizing environmental justice, tackling cumulative pollution impacts, and securing resources for improved air quality monitoring and enforcement in EJ areas.

1. adjournment

Dave Snyder, Co-Chair

The meeting was adjourned.

All meeting materials including speaker presentations can be found on the MWCOG website by clicking the link below –

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2024/10/23/ej-subcommittee/>

The next EJ Subcommittee meeting is November ??, 2024.

Reasonable accommodations are provided upon request, including alternative formats of meeting materials.  
For more information, visit: www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD)