

*MWAQC Environmental Justice and Air Quality Subcommittee  
Straw Proposal Draft (9/9/2024)*

*Problem Definition:*

Certain communities in the metropolitan Washington region may experience disproportionate health risks (and impacts on quality of life) from acute, chronic, and cumulative exposure to higher levels of various air and other pollutants. They may lack the awareness, knowledge, understanding, and capability to document, quantify, and address the pollution sources, pollution levels, and health and other environmental risks on their own. Residents need to be protected. They should not have the burden of addressing these problems on their own. There is a need for immediate and long-term government and partnership support and action to help build community awareness and help them better understand, document, and address these possible health risks.

Efforts to address the problem should be done with an understanding of the EPA definition of Environmental Justice:

**“Environmental justice** means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment so that people:

- are fully protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects (including risks) and hazards, including those related to climate change, the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens, and the legacy of racism or other structural or systemic barriers; and
- have equitable access to a healthy, sustainable, and resilient environment in which to live, play, work, learn, grow, worship, and engage in cultural and subsistence practices.”

(Source: <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice#definitions>)