

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft MEPA regulations. I grew up in one of the Commonwealth's environmental justice neighborhoods in an old mill town. As a kid, my family would take trips to visit nearby conservation land. We had to drive out of our neighborhood to take advantage of the clean air and public open space. We had rivers and wetlands near our house, but they were degraded and foul-smelling. Learning about the principles of ecological restoration challenged me to consider what is possible, and inspired me to imagine what restored ecosystems could do for their neighborhood. Restoration is in a unique position to be able to reverse the effects of environmental burdens that have been imposed on under-resourced communities.

I would like to raise concerns regarding the potential impact of requiring an EIR for projects within 1 mile of an environmental justice population. I am concerned that this requirement will make it more costly and time-intensive for proponents to permit proactive restoration projects in environmental justice neighborhoods like the one I grew up in. These projects do not cause damage to the environment, they seek to reverse past damage.

I am also concerned about the use of the term "handicap" in the definition of Environmental Justice Principles, rather than "disability". The term "handicap" is outdated, and carries a painful history for people with disabilities. The US Forest Service's [Accessibility Toolkit](#) outlines the history of this term, and why "disabled" is widely preferred.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on these draft regulations.

Sincerely,

-Carley Przystac  
Arlington, MA