



# Environmental Justice Strategy

Secretariat and agency strategies for proactively promoting environmental justice in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts



## Executive Summary

### I. Introduction

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) seeks to protect, preserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's environmental resources while ensuring a clean-energy future for the state's residents. EEA is charged with developing broad energy and environmental policy. Its policies are implemented through energy and environmental agencies that fall within the purview of the EEA Secretary, Rebecca L. Tepper.

The EEA [Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Policy](#) directed all EEA agencies to develop their own EJ strategies. The EJ Strategy is comprised of the environmental justice and equity strategies of EEA and its agencies. It is designed to inform and assist EEA staff in planning and implementing programs and policies under EEA's purview and is a tool for public engagement. Since the release of the Draft EJ Strategy in October 2022, the Environmental Justice Task Force has conducted further outreach, revising the Strategy to reflect public comments and providing transparent responses to public comments.

### II. Purpose and Use

The EJ Strategy consists of initiatives and programs to advance environmental justice and equity across EEA and its agencies. Environmental justice strategies that pertain to EEA and each specific agency under the purview of EEA are presented separately in this document. As a public and *living document*, the intended audience of the EJ Strategy is EEA staff as well as the public. This document is designed to inform and assist EEA staff in planning and implementing programs and policies under EEA's purview. It is also a tool for public engagement.

### III. Key Components of Environmental Justice Strategies

Below are highlights of core environmental justice strategies in the EJ Strategy of EEA and its agencies. In addition to issue-specific strategies that each agency developed, the themes below are cross cutting and universal.

- a. **Meaningful Engagement.** EEA and its agencies will cultivate new relationships with environmental justice populations and strengthen existing ones. This will include community-led processes designed with and for environmental justice populations.
- b. **Analyzing Project Impacts.** EEA and its agencies will work towards enhancing the analysis of project impacts on environmental justice populations, including an assessment of existing environmental burdens and public health consequences as well as an analysis of any potential additional impacts of projects using available state mapping and screening tools to identify environmental justice populations.
- c. **Language Access Plans.** EEA and its agencies will develop and adopt Language Access Plans (LAP) consistent with and under the Executive Office for Administration & Finance (A&F) Bulletin #16 and Executive Order (EO) 615.

- d. **Staff Trainings.** EEA and its agencies will coordinate an environmental justice training program series to educate and inspire EEA and its agencies, to understand and value environmental justice and equity, and to ensure that environmental justice and equity remain priorities.
- e. **Metrics and Tracking.** EEA and its agencies will focus on quantifying current baseline and future environmental justice metrics to measure progress. This includes developing environmental justice metrics that consider new data infrastructures and practices.

In addition to the cross-cutting strategies mentioned above, this EJ Strategy provides clear guidance on issue-specific initiatives that relate to environmental justice. For example, one of MDAR's strategies will be to work on deepening their relationship with Tribal partners and develop farming practices informed by Indigenous Technical Knowledge. Another strategy is DCR's work to expand the urban forestry initiative through Greening the Gateway Cities Program, where thousands of trees are planted in environmental justice areas providing a myriad of public health benefits, including mitigating extreme heat and urban heat islands. The EJ Strategy includes many issue-specific strategies applicable to every agency and office. These strategies are bold, creative, and ambitious.

#### IV. Next Steps

The EJ Strategy will be the guiding document to embed environmental justice and equity into the work of EEA and its agencies, and to be used as an engagement tool to plan next steps. It is a starting point. The EJ Strategy is valued as a *living document* that will continually transform itself in response to informed and practical public input and discussion. Specifically, it will require continued engagement with the Commonwealth's environmental justice populations, their community-based organizations, municipalities, state agencies and offices, and others.

As part of the iterative process, the EJ Strategy will be updated and revisited every three years. Annual EJ Progress Reports will provide updates and next steps to serve as interim status reports between each of the three years between each EJ Strategy. The first Annual Progress Report is scheduled for December 2024 and will continue to be issued annually.

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## **Letter from Secretary Rebecca L. Tepper**

On behalf of the Healey-Driscoll Administration, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is proud to release our inaugural Environmental Justice Strategy (EJ Strategy). With its publication, we mark a new era of environmental and energy justice policy implementation designed to bolster the Commonwealth's efforts to address the needs of these impacted communities. This document is the result of a collaborative effort involving all EEA agencies and is informed by released listening sessions and extensive public comments.

For far too long, low-income, racial, and ethnic minorities, Indigenous and tribal communities, and English-isolated populations have borne the brunt of adverse environmental impacts and industrial pollution. These communities, who have historically contributed the least to carbon emissions, now face disproportionate negative impacts from climate change. The Healey-Driscoll Administration is committed to addressing these systemic inequities and ensuring our most vulnerable residents are prioritized, protected, and no longer left behind.

Environmental injustice looks different across our Commonwealth. It can be reflected in the lack of tree canopy exacerbating urban heat islands and worsening upper respiratory illness, a single and significant source of pollution, rising asthma rates, contaminated soil, lack of access to green and blue spaces, devastation from floods, or neighborhoods struggling to recover after worsening storms.

The climate crisis is one of the biggest threats the Commonwealth faces today, but it can also present opportunities. This moment allows us to acknowledge and confront historic inequities and systems of oppression that have excluded environmental justice populations. Together, we must ensure that environmental justice populations are no longer disproportionately impacted by the effects of environmental pollution. As we transition to a green and clean energy economy, the Healey-Driscoll administration will prioritize environmental justice populations.

We are embedding environmental justice and equity into the fabric of EEA. One of my first actions as Secretary was to dedicate a senior member of our leadership team specifically to Environmental Justice and Equity. We also significantly expanded the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity to produce meaningful and measurable impact by strategically planning and implementing policies with the vision and expertise required to drive the next steps of our EJ Strategy.

With this EJ Strategy as a guide, all EEA agencies will embed environmental justice and equity into their everyday work and decision-making to deliver on environmental justice through leadership and bold action.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca L. Tepper  
Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs

## Planning Context

In September 2020, EEA convened an Environmental Justice Task Force (EJ Task Force) comprised of EEA staff serving as environmental justice points of contact representing each EEA agency. In October 2022, the Baker-Polito Administration released the Draft Environmental Justice Strategy (Draft Strategy), which included a multi-year analysis and a public process that sought input and feedback through public meetings and written comments. The Draft Strategy sought to promote environmental, energy, and climate justice across the Commonwealth in ways tailored to each EEA agency's mission. Since the release of the Draft Strategy, the EJ Task Force has conducted further outreach, revising the Strategy to reflect public comments and providing transparent responses to public comments.

## EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity

In March 2023, Governor Healey and EEA Secretary Rebecca L. Tepper announced a new position to elevate environmental justice and equity as a critical part of the Healey-Driscoll Administration's agenda. María Belén Power joined the Administration as the Undersecretary of Environmental Justice and Equity within the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity to accelerate environmental justice and equity within EEA and across its agencies. Governor Healey further supported this commitment by allocating the largest investment to date to EEA and providing funding for a dedicated Environmental Justice liaison within each agency who will be the point of contact.

The Undersecretary has focused on building a strong and impactful team, as well as traveling the State to meet environmental justice populations in every corner of the Commonwealth. This understanding of the depth and breadth of residents' concerns, priorities, and lived experiences will guide the work of the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity. As of December 2023, the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity has visited and/or hosted listening sessions across the State.

## Next Steps

The current EJ Strategy<sup>1</sup> and Response to Comments for each EEA agency will be the guiding document to embed environmental justice and equity into the work of EEA's agencies, as well as an engagement tool to plan next steps. This EJ Strategy is meant to be a *living document* that is updated regularly to reflect feedback and incorporate lessons learned. Next steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Coordinating a series of separate Environmental Justice and Equity meetings with each EEA agency and their Environmental Justice liaison to discuss the current state of environmental justice and equity reflected in their agency's strategies and responses.
- Recommending long-term solutions to environmental justice and equity program gaps. These solutions will be ambitious and sustainable.
- Planning and coordinating efforts to further improve and embed environmental justice and equity in each EEA agency.

- Working with EEA agencies to update their EJ Strategy every three years, with annual progress reports.

As part of the iterative process, the EJ Strategy will be updated and revisited every three years. Annual EEA Environmental Justice Progress Reports will provide updates and next steps to serve as interim status reports between each update. The first EEA Environmental Justice Progress Report is scheduled for December 2024.

## **EEA Environmental Justice Task Force**

Below is a list of current and former members of the EEA Environmental Justice Task Force that contributed to the development of the Environmental Justice Strategy:

- Rose Arruda, *Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)*
- Jorge J. Ayub, *Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)*
- Vallery Cardoso, *formerly of Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)*
- Major Kevin Clayton, *Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)*
- Beverly Craig, *Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC)*
- Tomeka Cribb, *Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)*
- Page Czepiga, *Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA)*
- Rebecca Davidson, *Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)*
- Tamika Jacques, *formerly of Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC)*
- Tori Kim, *Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA)*
- Caroline Lemoine, *formerly of Department of Public Utilities (DPU)*
- Jade Lu, *Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC)*
- Cindy Montoya, *EEA Human Resources (EEA HR)*
- Danilo Morales, *Department of Energy Resources (DOER)*
- Dominique Pahlavan, *EEA Geographic Information Systems (EEA GIS)*
- Rishi Reddi, *formerly of Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)*
- Mark Reil, *formerly of Department of Fish and Game (DFG)*
- Francisco Rodriguez, *Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)*
- James Rossignol, *Department of Fish and Game (DFG)*
- Kari Sasportas, *Office of Technical Assistance (OTA)*
- Deneen Simpson, *Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)*
- Tiffany Skogstrom, *Office of Technical Assistance (OTA)*
- Tyler Soleau, *Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM)*
- Wayne Wang, *Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB)*
- Alexis Washburn, *formerly of Department of Energy Resources (DOER)*
- Scott Seigal, *Department of Public Utilities (DPU)*
- Noah McClanan, *Department of Fish and Game (DFG)*

## Purpose and Use

Massachusetts Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll recognize that the climate crisis is our biggest challenge, and there is enormous opportunity in our response. We want to meet this moment with innovation and urgency to make Massachusetts a world leader in combating the climate crisis and driving an equitable clean energy transition.

EEA seeks to protect, preserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's environmental resources while ensuring a clean energy future for the state's residents. EEA is charged with developing broad energy and environmental policy. Its policies are implemented through several energy and environmental agencies that fall within the purview of the EEA Secretary, Rebecca L. Tepper.

Through the stewardship of open space, protection of environmental resources, and enhancement of clean energy, EEA works to make Massachusetts a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

The EEA Secretariat includes: the Department of Energy Resources (DOER), Department of Public Utilities (DPU), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR). EEA also has the following offices within the Secretariat, including the Office of Law Enforcement (OLE or Massachusetts Environmental Police), Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) office, Coastal Zone Management (CZM) office, Office of Technical Assistance and Technology (OTA), and Division of Conservation Services (DCS). Additionally, Secretary Rebecca L. Tepper chairs the Executive Boards of the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. All agencies and Offices promote energy or environmental-related goals and initiatives of the Administration and the EEA Secretariat.

Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll support environmental justice and equity and have committed to deliver good-paying jobs, healthier communities, and more affordable energy, all while ensuring that we protect our most vulnerable residents and center the voices of those who have been historically excluded.

The EJ Strategy consists of initiatives and programs to advance environmental justice and equity across EEA and its agencies. Environmental justice strategies that pertain to each specific agency under the purview of EEA are presented separately in this document.

As a public and *living document*, the intended audience of the EJ Strategy is the staff at EEA and its agencies, as well as the public. This document is designed to inform and assist staff in planning and implementing programs and policies. It is also a tool for public engagement.

In addition, EEA values the voices of environmental justice populations and seeks to cultivate relationships with environmental justice populations across the Commonwealth. EEA strives for meaningful community engagement to strengthen sustainable solutions that address systemic barriers of oppression. Given the EJ Strategy's iterative process, it is critical that environmental

justice populations and/or their representatives provide input and comments to the EJ Strategy produced every three years and to the Annual EEA Environmental Justice Progress Reports, as well as reach out to the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity to suggest changes to each update and progress report.

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# Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

## Office of the Secretary



### Environmental Justice Strategy



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## Office of the Secretary

### Massachusetts Environmental Justice Policy

The Environmental Justice Policy, first issued in 2002, was informed by an advisory committee of stakeholders known as the Massachusetts Environmental Justice Advisory Committee. In 2014, Governor Deval L. Patrick signed Executive Order No. 552, establishing the Governor's Environmental Justice Advisory Council and requiring updates to the Environmental Justice Policy. EEA's Environmental Justice Policy was most recently updated in June 2021 and directs all EEA agencies to develop their own EJ strategies to "proactively promote environmental justice in all neighborhoods in ways that are tailored to the agencies' missions." In January of 2023, Governor Healey established the nation's first Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience within the Governor's Office, led by a cabinet-level Climate Chief. The Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience and the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity work hand-in-hand to address climate and environmental justice through a whole-of-government approach.

EEA's Environmental Justice Policy (EJ Policy) directs all EEA agencies to develop their own EJ strategies to "proactively promote environmental justice in all neighborhoods in ways that are tailored to the agencies' missions." The EJ Policy further provides that these separate strategies will be consolidated into one "Secretariat EJ Strategy" and will be finalized by a date established by the Secretary.

To meet this requirement, this comprehensive Secretariat EJ Strategy has been developed by EEA's EJ Program together with EEA's agencies, offices, and programs. According to the EJ Policy, the agency strategies should "consider how to appropriately integrate environmental justice considerations into their departments through policies, programs, or other strategies...EEA agencies shall identify and promote agency-sponsored projects, funding decisions, rulemakings, or other actions intended to further environmental justice throughout the Commonwealth to show how the fair distribution of benefits has been measured."

### Statement of Purpose

It is the policy of EEA that environmental justice and equity principles will be an integral consideration, to the extent applicable and allowable by law, in the implementation of all EEA programs, including but not limited to the grant of financial resources or technical assistance, the promulgation, implementation, and enforcement of laws, regulations, and policies, the provision of access to both active and passive open space, and the diversification of energy sources, including energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. Further, any agency, department, division, board, and office within EEA that is making any policy, determination, or taking any other action related to a project that is subject to review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policies Act ("MEPA"), must consider "environmental justice principles," as defined in M.G.L. c. 30 section 62.

Environmental justice is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment regardless of

race, color, national origin, income, or English language proficiency. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.

## Legal Authority

EEA and its agencies are required to comply with several state legal authorities that ensure equity in implementing EEA's laws and programs. These authorities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- [Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2021: An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy](#)
- MA Executive Order [\(EO\) 526](#)
- MA Executive Order [\(EO\) 552](#)
- [The Executive Office of Administration and Finance \(A&F\)'s Language Access Policy \(Bulletin #16\)](#).
- MA Executive Order [\(EO\) 615](#)

In addition, because of its status as a recipient of funding from the federal government, EEA must ensure that its programs accord with federal law that forbids discrimination based on race, color, or national origin.

## Applicability

In accordance with the requirements of the EEA Environmental Justice Policy, this EEA Environmental Justice Strategy applies to the Office of the Secretary and the following initiatives and programs housed within it:

- Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC)
- Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) programs
- Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET)
- Massachusetts Bay Estuary Program
- Massachusetts Water Resources Commission
- Massachusetts Licensed Site Professional Board
- Massachusetts Hazardous Waste Site Cleanup Professionals Board
- Massachusetts Interagency Land Committee (ILC)
- Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services (DCS)
- Other programs under the Office of Decarbonization and Resilience, including but not limited to ResilientMass, the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP), and implementation of the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA)

Offices housed within EEA and chaired by Secretary Rebecca L. Tepper that have developed their own Environmental Justice Strategies include the following:

- Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)
- Coastal Zone Management (CZM)
- Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) and the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP) may refer to and adopt various provisions of this strategy into their own.
- Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA)
- Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (CEC)

## EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity

In March 2023, EEA Secretary Rebecca L. Tepper announced a newly created position to elevate environmental justice and equity as a critical part of the Healey-Driscoll Administration's agenda. María Belén Power joined the administration as the Undersecretary of Environmental Justice and Equity within the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity to accelerate environmental justice and equity in the EEA and its agencies.

While the EEA EJ Strategy compiles all the environmental justice strategies of the EEA's agencies, this section of the document only pertains to the environmental justice and equity strategies to be executed by the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity within the Office of the Secretary. It is a multi-faceted strategic program to be planned and implemented within a multi-year schedule. Many of the strategies will be developed in the short term, while others require greater coordination and planning to advance effectively and measurably.

Below are the environmental justice and equity strategies to be advanced by the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity. The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity has begun to develop and implement these strategies through meaningful engagement with state agencies across all government and community partners from across the Commonwealth. With a fully staffed Environmental Justice and Equity Office, the strategies will progress in an effective and timely manner.

### Key Strategies

#### 1. EEA Energy and Environmental Agencies

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity staff will work closely with and guide the EEA's energy and environmental agencies to further build environmental justice and equity into their programs, policies, and regulations in accordance with the Environmental Justice Policy. Specifically, the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will implement the following efforts:

- a. Coordinate a series of separate Environmental Justice and Equity Meetings with each EEA agency's Environmental Justice liaison to discuss the current state of environmental justice and equity reflected in their strategies and responses.
- b. Recommend long-term solutions to environmental justice and equity program gaps. These solutions will be both ambitious as well as sustainable.

- c. Plan and coordinate efforts to improve and embed environmental justice and equity further in each EEA agency.
- d. Work with EEA agencies to update their Environmental Justice Strategy every three years, with Annual Progress Reports.

## **2. Environmental Justice liaison at EEA Energy and Environmental Agencies**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will coordinate with each EEA agency's Environmental Justice liaison to ensure all liaisons across the Secretariat are aligned and coordinated on implementation strategies.

## **3. Federal Grant Funding and Justice40 Initiative**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work in close coordination with the newly created Office of Federal Funds and Infrastructure and the Advisory Council on Federal Funds and Infrastructure to ensure all grant opportunities across all agencies have meaningful input from the environmental justice populations and are distributed in an equitable manner in order to have the most impactful outcome while meeting the Justice40 Initiative threshold targets. In addition, the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will support meaningful engagement with environmental justice populations for grant applications and serve as a liaison between EEA agencies, other Secretariats, and community-based organizations across the Commonwealth. The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work to ensure all relationships with environmental justice populations are based on mutuality, respect, and solidarity.

## **4. Equitable Clean Energy Workforce Development**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will assist EEA agencies with any existing and/or proposed programs that include and/or should include clean energy workforce development to ensure that the scope and allocated budget are equitable and have measurable impact. In addition, the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will coordinate with and track multi-sector clean energy workforce development programs to ensure that clean energy workforce development pipeline models are developed to effectively engage, attract, train, and retain diverse populations, including people from environmental justice populations.

Furthermore, EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with appropriate agencies to develop and implement clean energy workforce development marketing campaigns in environmental justice populations and help to oversee clean energy workforce development pipeline models to ensure the State builds the workforce necessary to meet its climate goals.

## **5. Environmental Justice Metrics**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will focus on quantifying current baseline and future environmental justice metrics to measure progress. This includes developing EJ metrics that consider new data infrastructures and practices.

## 6. Cumulative Impacts and Benefits vs Burdens

Cumulative Impacts: Incorporating lessons learned from MassDEP's experience in developing cumulative impacts analysis regulations, the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with all EEA agencies to develop relevant frameworks by which cumulative impacts analyses can be incorporated into their program and policies.

Benefits and Burdens: The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with all EEA agencies to develop relevant frameworks by which benefits and burdens can be quantitatively or qualitatively measured when considering projects and policies that affect or pertain to environmental justice populations.

## 7. Climate and Energy Equity and Justice

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with EEA agencies and others to ensure that environmental justice populations have access to, participate in, and benefit from climate and clean energy programs. The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work hand in hand with the Department of Energy Resources to ensure programs and grants are developed and implemented in an equitable way. Furthermore, there will be close coordination between the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity, the Department of Public Utilities, and the Energy Facilities Siting Board to ensure all processes are inclusive and consider EJ principles.

## 8. Global Warming Solutions Act

On June 30, 2022, EEA issued the *Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2025 and 2030*. All aspects of this plan have been drafted through an environmental justice, energy justice, and climate justice lens, and take note of the recommendations of the Climate Justice Working Group of the Implementation Advisory Committee. The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with the climate team to influence all aspects of planning for a just transition to a clean energy economy, including efforts regarding weatherization and electrification, land use, transportation, and workforce development.

## 9. Environmental Justice for Tribes and Indigenous Peoples

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work closely with Indigenous leaders and Indigenous-led organizations focused on environmental justice in their Indigenous communities. We are committed to further understanding Indigenous environmental justice experiences and needs and addressing these challenges while respecting sovereignty and self-determination.

## Engagement

### 10. Outreach and Engagement

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will cultivate new and strengthen existing relationships with environmental justice populations in an effective approach, including with community-led processes designed with and for environmental justice populations.

## **11. Public Engagement and Trainings**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will provide public training opportunities. Including, for example, a training on grant writing, a training on the review process under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), and a training on the process for submitting comments to the Energy Facilities Siting Board. The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity is open to receiving feedback from the public on what trainings would be most helpful across agencies in the Secretariat.

## **12. Massachusetts Environmental Justice Task Force**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will continue to lead and facilitate the Environmental Justice Task Force, through which many of the strategies named in this document will be discussed and addressed for proper implementation.

## **13. Massachusetts Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will continue to lead and facilitate the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group, which convenes all Secretariats to foster collaboration and advance environmental justice through a whole-of-government approach.

## **14. Massachusetts Environmental Justice Council**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will continue to convene the Massachusetts Environmental Justice Council. Beginning in 2024, the Council will publish locations and dates for hybrid meetings planned across the Commonwealth for the entire year, providing a space for residents from different cities and towns to attend in person and address the Council directly. Public comments will now be allowed twice in every Environmental Justice Council meeting — at the beginning and at the end of each meeting. The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity is working diligently to remove any and all barriers to participation.

## **15. EEA Environmental Justice Trainings**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will coordinate an environmental justice training program series to educate and inspire EEA agencies to understand and value environmental justice and equity, as well as to ensure environmental justice and equity remain priorities. Trainings will primarily focus on environmental justice mapping tools, cumulative impact analysis, best practices for community/stakeholder outreach and engagement, and provision of language access services training for each of the EEA agencies and offices.

Environmental justice training will prioritize EEA staff responsible for implementing policies and programs; approving permits and projects; disbursing grants for the provision of open space, river maintenance, or restoration; education; and technical assistance, education, and other.

## **16. Environmental Justice Organization Contact List**

The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will continue to manage a list of environmental justice and equity community and advocacy organizations and an "Environmental Justice Mailing List" consisting of EJ organizations, social justice organizations, interested members of

environmental justice populations, community development corporations, grassroots and community organizations, schools, health clinics, and others who may be interested in environmental justice issues. This contact list will be used to disseminate information and will be distributed by EEA to its agencies and to other Secretariats upon request for use in sending newsletters and notice of grant/funding opportunities and other general outreach information. The contact list will also be used to assist the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA) project proponents and other entities who request information in their outreach efforts.

### **17. Public Involvement**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will develop a Stakeholder Outreach, Community Engagement, and Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to provide guidance to EEA staff on effective and meaningful public involvement and community engagement. The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with EEA agencies to ensure each a robust PIP and implements it.

### **18. Language Access Plans**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will develop and adopt a Language Access Plan (LAP) consistent with Executive Office for Administration & Finance (A&F) Bulletin #16 and Executive Order (EO) 615. In addition, EEA has initiated a process by which each EEA agency and office will adopt LAPs and will continue to work with them to ensure Secretariat-wide compliance with A&F Bulletin #16 and EO 615, which requires LAPs for each Department. These LAPs are applicable when agency staff are working with neighborhoods in which 5% or more individuals have limited English proficiency (LEP). EEA has designated a Language Access Coordinator who is responsible for agency implementation and compliance with the EEA's Language Access Plan. EEA has institutionalized the use of statewide contract PRF75: Foreign Language Interpretation and Translation Services for the purpose of obtaining professional translators and interpreters. Funding has been allocated for the use of these services.

### **19. Stakeholder Engagement and Community Outreach**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will continue to allocate funding needed for in-person, virtual, and telephonic interpretation and translation of outreach emails, informational material, reports, and other documents. Also, EEA will seek methods for restructuring the format of public outreach and community engagement, including responses to questions and concerns raised, in order to make these opportunities more interactive and accessible.

### **20. Environmental Justice Maps**

To identify EJ populations, the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will continue to prepare and revise detailed maps based on the most appropriate and up-to-date data collected by the United States Census Bureau. EEA will additionally work to map out watershed communities with an overlay of environmental justice populations in order to fully understand the environmental impacts across cities and towns.

## **21. Environmental Justice Web Page**

EEA launched an updated environmental justice and equity website in June 2021. The updated web page includes environmental justice populations and links to corresponding Geographic Information System (GIS) maps. The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will maintain and update the website as an online repository for information about the Commonwealth's environmental justice and equity activities, mapping tools and data, initiatives, resources, and pertinent public comments received. EEA will also include translations of the web pages and information in the top ten languages spoken in MA. Terminology used on the web page will be reviewed to ensure accessibility to those unfamiliar with the technical language used in environmental and government work.

## **22. Local and Non-English Speaking Media Outlets**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity has further developed a list of non-traditional information outlets to be made available to EEA agencies seeking public comments and to project proponents who may be asked to publish public notices for projects that are in or may otherwise impact environmental justice populations. EEA is continually maintaining this list by adding new outlets, keeping contact information up to date, and deleting outlets that are no longer in business or relevant for this purpose.

## **23. Fact Sheets**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with appropriate agencies and offices to develop fact sheets on the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA), the Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC), the Massachusetts Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) programs, the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, and other programs including those related to climate change adaptation, to inform residents in neighborhoods where Environmental Justice populations reside that these programs exist and how they function. All fact sheets will be translated into the top ten languages spoken across the Commonwealth. Fact sheets will be available in print and digital formats for distribution.

## **24. Targeted Compliance, Enforcement, and Assistance**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will seek to support communities and EEA's agencies in neighborhoods where environmental populations reside and where local environmental and public health conditions warrant increased attention. This effort will also guide EEA agencies to coordinate their compliance assistance efforts with federal agencies, local boards of health and other municipal offices, and community-based organizations in neighborhoods where environmental justice populations reside.

## **Equitable EEA**

### **25. EEA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ)**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work closely with the EEA Human Resources DEI Team to assess and develop strategies to improve EEA agencies' Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice program.

### **26. EEA Equitable Recruitment**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity commits to working with the EEA Human Resources DEI Team to assess and implement an equitable recruitment process, including providing training for hiring managers to promote equitable decision-making to avoid bias and discrimination in hiring decisions.

### **27. EEA Equitable Procurement**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will assess and strengthen EEA agencies' procurement and contracting practices to improve the EEA performance in diverse supplier spending for 2024 and beyond, to the extent permissible under rules set by the Operational Services Division.

## **Environment**

### **28. Open Spaces**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work to promote open spaces located in neighborhoods where environmental justice populations reside, including, but not limited to, implementing the Urban Forestry and Greening the Gateway Cities programs to increase urban forest canopy in environmental justice neighborhoods.

### **29. Brownfields Revitalization**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work closely with EEA agencies to continue to prioritize environmental justice populations in its collaborative work with state, local, and federal partners to maximize Brownfields remediation and redevelopment programs, including work with the Department of Housing and Economic Development, MassDevelopment, the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General, the Department of Revenue, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Department of Energy Resources, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and other municipal, regional, non-profit, and private sector stakeholders. Examples of state programming that were designed to support vulnerable communities and would thereby benefit EJ populations are the Gateway City Parks Program, the Lt. Governor's Community Compact Cabinet, the State Revolving Fund (SRF), the Environmental Information Public Access System (EIPAS), the Governor's Urban Agenda, MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI), and Massachusetts Department of Public Health's (MDPH) Mass in Motion.

### **30. Environmental Justice and Public Health**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) will continue to meet regularly to coordinate on environmental justice issues potentially affecting public health. This includes matters related to exposures from multiple and cumulative sources of pollution and efforts focused on environmental justice neighborhoods, including project-specific concerns or questions from environmental justice populations. Additionally, the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will support the creation of tools that intersect with the jurisdiction of all three agencies and contribute to increased knowledge regarding the cumulative impacts of multiple pollution sources and socio-economic factors in environmental justice neighborhoods.

## **Grants**

### **31. Grants**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with EEA agencies to continue to consider environmental justice as a criterion for awarding grants and prioritizing program funding to applicable recipients. Furthermore, EEA and its agencies will continue to prioritize EJ populations through attentive planning practices and thoughtful consideration when permitting and developing.

### **32. Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will continue to develop and implement grant criteria to incentivize projects that assist vulnerable populations and neighborhoods and will continue to actively encourage municipal leaders and stakeholders to engage proactively with environmental justice populations. Furthermore, as the MVP program revises its required municipal-level climate resilience planning process, it will work to elevate the voices of vulnerable environmental justice populations and their representatives in the planning process and build stronger project-based partnerships between municipalities and environmental justice populations.

### **33. Economic Partnerships/Job Opportunities**

The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) and the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) on promoting economic partnerships and increasing job opportunities as we address our Commonwealth's housing crisis. Specifically, EEA will work with EOED to promote economic development projects that incorporate cleaner production practices and toxics-use reduction and create jobs in neighborhoods where environmental justice populations reside. This will include, but not be limited to, collaboration with the following key groups:

- a. **The Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC).** With the assistance of Executive Office of Economic Development, the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will formally request that the EACC adopt a proposal that would

encourage new and existing manufacturing operations that are seeking incentives through the Economic Development Incentive Program to consult with the Office of Technical Assistance and Technology (OTA) on cleaner production manufacturing practices.

- b. **Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD).** The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will coordinate with MOBD to more effectively link the issues of economic and environmental justice at the neighborhood level.
- c. **Executive Office of Economic Development, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, and Executive Office of Housing and Community Development.** The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work closely with all Secretariats to maximize the benefit of its resources on issues of growth and community development, as well as housing and environmental justice. This will include, but not be limited to, discussions around the growth and development of affordable housing in neighborhoods where environmental justice populations reside.
- d. **Riverways and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET).** The EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with the Department of Fish and Game's Division of Ecological Restoration and MET to develop systems for incorporating environmental justice as a criterion for awarding grants with the goal of having these systems in place by the next funding cycle for these grant programs.

## Next Steps

This EEA Environmental Justice Strategy is a starting point. With its new staff, the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity is now focused on commencing with planning and coordinating environmental justice and equity initiatives.

The EEA Environmental Justice Strategy is valued as a living document that will continually transform in response to informed and practical public input and discussion. Specifically, it will require continued engagement with the Commonwealth's environmental justice populations, their community-based organizations, municipalities and state agencies and offices, and others. The Office of Environmental Justice and Equity will work with the Department of Conservation Services and the Office of Climate Science at EEA to develop their Environmental Justice Strategy. Annual EEA Environmental Justice Progress Reports will provide updates and next steps to serve as interim status reports for each of the three years between the release of each EEA Environmental Justice Strategy. The first Annual Progress Report is scheduled for December 2024 and will continue to be issued annually.

## Enforcement of the EEA Environmental Justice Strategy

EEA's agencies are committed to environmental justice and equity and strive to further improve environmental justice strategies, criteria, metrics, and methodologies. EEA responds to public inquiries and complaints with investigations, implementation of necessary corrective actions, and feedback and communication with the complainant.

For any environmental justice concerns, complaints, compliments, or ideas, please send an email to: [EJinquiries@mass.gov](mailto:EJinquiries@mass.gov). For additional assistance, please contact the EEA Office of Environmental Justice and Equity at the following contact information:

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## Environmental Justice and Equity Definitions

Key terms and definitions pertaining to environmental justice and equity relevant to the EEA Environmental Justice Strategy include, but are not limited to, the following:

**“Cleaner Production”** means a manufacturing process or approach to manufacturing production that is based on toxics-use reduction and pollution prevention and that strives to incorporate the following components: waste reduction, non-polluting production, energy efficiency, safe and healthy work environments, and environmentally sound products and packaging.

**“Distributional Equity”** is when policies and programs result in fair distribution of the benefits and burdens across all segments of communities, prioritizing those with the greatest need.

**“Energy Benefits”** means access to funding, training, renewable or alternative energy, energy efficiency, or other beneficial resources disbursed by EEA, its agencies, and its offices.

**“Environmental Benefits”** means access to clean natural resources, including air, water resources, open space, constructed playgrounds and other outdoor recreational facilities and venues, clean renewable energy course, environmental enforcement, training, and funding disbursed or administered by EEA.

**“Environmental Burdens”** means any destruction, damage, or impairment of natural resources that is not insignificant, resulting from intentional or reasonably foreseeable causes, including but not limited to climate change, air pollution, water pollution, improper sewage disposal, dumping of solid wastes and other noxious substances, excessive noise, activities that limit access to natural resources and constructed outdoor recreational facilities and venues, inadequate remediation of pollution, reduction of groundwater levels, impairment of water quality, increased flooding or stormwater flows, and damage to inland waterways and waterbodies, wetlands, marine shores and waters, forests, open spaces, and playgrounds from private industrial, commercial, or government operations or other activity that contaminates or alters the quality of the environment and poses a risk to public health.

**“Environmental Justice Principles”** support people’s protection from environmental pollution and the ability to live in and enjoy a clean and healthy environment, regardless of race, color, income, class, handicap, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity or ancestry, religious belief, or English language proficiency, which includes: (i) the meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, including climate change policies; and (ii) the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and environmental burdens.

“Environmental Justice Population” refers to a neighborhood that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- The annual median household income is not more than 65 percent of the statewide annual median household income.
- Minorities comprise 40 percent or more of the population.
- 25 percent or more of households lack English language proficiency.
- Minorities comprise 25 percent or more of the population, and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 percent of the statewide annual median household income.
- A geographic portion of a neighborhood designated by the Secretary as an environmental justice population in accordance with law.

“English Isolation” refers to households that are English Language Isolated according to federal census forms, or that do not have an adult over the age of 14 who speaks only English or who speaks English very well.

“Equal Protection” means protection of all groups of people, including all federally and state-protected classes under Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. Section 2000d et seq. and M.G.L. Chapter 15 1B, regardless of income, ethnicity, class, handicap, race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, genetic information, or ancestry, from an unfair burden of environmental hazard from industrial, commercial, state, and municipal operations or limited access to natural resources, including green space (open space) and water resources, and energy resources, including energy efficiency and renewable energy generation.

“Low Income” means annual median household income at or below 65 percent of the statewide median income for Massachusetts, according to federal census data.

“Meaningful Involvement” means that all neighborhoods have the right and opportunity to participate in energy, climate change, and environmental decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, compliance and enforcement, and evaluation, and neighborhoods are enabled and administratively assisted to participate fully through education and training, and are given transparency/accountability by government with regard to community input, and encouraged to develop environmental, energy, and climate change stewardship.

“MEPA” is the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, M.G.L. Ch.30, Sections 61-62L. Under the MEPA statute, EEA reviews the potential environmental impacts of state agency actions that exceed certain regulatory thresholds. MEPA involves public review and comment and is subject to strict statutory deadlines on the length of reviews.

**“Neighborhood”** means a census block group as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, excluding people who live in college dormitories and people who are under formally authorized, supervised care or custody, including federal, state, or county prisons.

**“Procedural Equity”** is when decision-makers create inclusive, accessible, and authentic engagement and representation in a process to develop or implement programs and policies.

**“Structural Equity”** is when decision-makers recognize and address the historical, cultural, and institutional dynamics that have led to inequities, and decision-makers reform programs that perpetuate disparities and build programs that are equitable for all residents.

**“Supplemental Environmental Project”** means an environmentally beneficial project in the settlement of environmental enforcement cases as set forth in "Policy on Supplemental Environmental Projects," Department of Environmental Protection Policy ENF-07.001.

**“Transgenerational Equity”** is when decisions consider generational impacts and do not result in unfair burdens on future generations.

**“Vulnerable Health Environmental Justice Populations”** means segments of the population that have evidence of higher-than-average rates of environmentally related health outcomes, including but not limited to childhood asthma, low birth weight, childhood lead poisoning, and/or heart disease morbidity.

Department of Conservation and Recreation



Environmental Justice Strategy

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## Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

### DCR Mission Statement

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) seeks to protect, promote, and enhance our commonwealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the well-being of all. In meeting today's responsibilities and planning for tomorrow, DCR's focus is on:

- Improving outdoor recreational opportunities and natural resource conservation;
- Restoring and improving our facilities;
- Expanding public involvement in carrying out DCR's mission; and
- Establishing first-rate management systems and practices.

The health and happiness of people across Massachusetts depend on the accessibility and quality of our green infrastructure — our natural resources, recreational facilities, and great historic landscapes. The DCR continues to improve the vital connection between people and the environment.

### Background

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) established an Environmental Justice (EJ) Policy to help address the disproportionate share of environmental burdens experienced by lower-income people and communities of color who, at the same time, often lack environmental assets in their neighborhoods. The policy is designed to help ensure protection from environmental pollution as well as promote community involvement in planning and environmental decision-making to maintain and/or enhance the environmental quality of these neighborhoods.

The June 2021 EJ Policy includes the following definition, “Environmental justice is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or English language proficiency. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.”

### EEA Directive for Agency EJ Strategy Development

The Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Environmental Justice Policy directs all EEA agencies to develop individual EJ strategies. In doing so, EEA agencies shall consider how to appropriately integrate environmental justice considerations into their departments through policies, programs, or other strategies. EEA agencies shall identify and promote agency-sponsored projects, funding decisions, rulemakings, or other actions intended to further

environmental justice throughout the Commonwealth to show how the fair distribution of benefits has been measured. These strategies will be consolidated into one final Secretariat EJ Strategy.

## DCR EJ Strategy

DCR manages and oversees more than 450,000 acres throughout Massachusetts and provides the public with a diversity of recreational opportunities. This includes, but is not limited to, parks, forests, beaches, watersheds, ball fields and courts, playgrounds, campsites, swimming pools, spray decks, downhill ski areas, trails, and ice-skating rinks. As one of the largest land-holding agencies in the Commonwealth, with facilities and parks in communities across the state, the DCR can play a prominent role in ensuring equitable access to natural, cultural, and recreational resources and meaningful involvement of all people and communities in their stewardship.

A more detailed snapshot from DCR's asset management database shows that DCR owns or manages over 3,996 buildings and improvements throughout the Commonwealth. Close to 25% (981) of these facilities are in block groups that fit EEA's classification of an Environmental Justice Block Group. Out of this group of facilities, 15% are in block groups that fit the minority criteria (minorities comprise 40% or more of the population), 4% of these facilities are in block groups that fall within the minority and income threshold (<65% statewide annual median household income).

With facilities and park lands in many Environmental Justice communities across the Commonwealth, DCR has important resources to offer and can be an integral part of EEA's Environmental Justice Strategy.

EJ Criteria	# of DCR Buildings/Improvements(B/I) in EJ Block Groups by EJ Criteria
Minority	592 (15%)
Minority, Income	162 (4%)
Income	152 (3%)
Minority, Income, and English Isolation	51 (1%)
Minority, English Isolation	13 (0.3%)
English Isolation	11 (0.2%)
Total Buildings in EJ Block Groups	981 (25%)
Total B/I in owned and managed by DCR	3,996

DCR's EJ Strategy identifies the areas of focus and action the agency will undertake to advance the 2017 EEA EJ Policy. The Strategy consists of components designed to:

- Expand accessibility of agency resources and EJ population engagement.
- Promote transparency and information sharing relative to EJ initiatives and goals.
- Prioritize and evaluate investments and allocation of resources to serve EJ populations.
- Provide training to staff on Environmental Justice principles and elements of DCR's EJ Strategy.

DCR will periodically review and update the Strategy no less than every three years.

## Accessibility and Engagement

DCR is committed to increasing engagement with environmental justice populations and enhancing the agency's accessibility. In order to ensure inclusive public engagement practices and processes, DCR commits to developing an EJ Public Participation Plan. The plan will supplement the agency's existing public outreach program. Key actions of the plan will include:

- Developing a centralized inventory of community and advocacy groups by region accessible to all DCR staff.
- Continuing to build relationships in EJ populations and maintain ongoing communication with community/advocacy groups and municipal officials. This includes sharing information and seeking input pertaining to projects, programs, activities, and grant opportunities.
- Providing staff with guidance and best practices for community outreach. Continuing to use the EEA data portal to provide community-specific information to the public.
- Virtual meeting formats have helped facilitate reaching wider audiences and addressed some barriers to participation (e.g., transportation, childcare). DCR will continue offering virtual and hybrid public meetings, webinars, and engagement opportunities, as well as seeking comments and suggestions through email and web-form submittal as an option for participation.
- DCR has allocated funding and is establishing a protocol for language translation services, meeting ADA requirements and following best practices. This will include the availability of language translation services at community engagement meetings, on-demand translation services, and translation of critical outreach information. The agency will develop a consistent approach for translation of materials and documents.
- DCR is developing a multilingual approach to signage and will continue to evaluate the inclusion of languages other than English in order to improve communication of warnings and advisories to limited English proficiency communities. Examples: DCR's Shorebird Recovery Program is developing interpretive signage about threatened and endangered shorebirds found on DCR beaches that will be available in multiple languages through a QR code. Similarly, DCR developed signs for areas closed to the public [note - for the Asset Mitigation Initiative] with universal symbols and a QR code to access the sign in multiple languages.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is fully committed to enhancing access to our facilities for Environmental Justice communities. In the future, DCR will be implementing a comprehensive language accessibility program to ensure that our parks are welcoming and accessible to all. This will include the expansion of the DCR Park Alert system to feature multiple languages, allowing families to receive real-time updates and plan their visits without the concern of unexpected closures. Additionally, once visitors arrive at our parks, they will find increased multilingual signage designed to eliminate communication barriers and provide a more inclusive experience.

## Transparency and Communication

DCR is committed to enhancing communications related to interactions with environmental justice populations and to implementing related programs. The agency will create an EJ web page as part of the agency's web presence to provide useful information and resources such as:

- DCR's EJ Point of Contact
- EEA EJ Director's Point of Contact
- 2017 & 2002 EEA EJ Policy
- Links to related Federal Laws & Executive Orders
- Embedded EJ Map Viewer integrating DCR Properties
- Embedded EJ Map Viewer with Language Considerations relative to our properties and assets
- Information about language translation assistance
- Centralized information about grants and engagement opportunities

DCR will use the web page to communicate with residents, EJ population members, and advocacy groups about the types of EJ programs, projects, grants, and available activities. The agency will also share metrics and reports to transparently evaluate progress in advancing environmental justice (see below).

## Investments and Allocation of Resources

Many DCR properties and facilities, such as many pools, spray decks, campgrounds, and skating rinks, are located in communities with significant EJ populations. DCR seeks to consider environmental justice when directing resources and investments and will develop ways to evaluate and measure the resulting positive impact. DCR is developing an online project map that will display capital projects underway throughout the state, with an overlay of the EJ data layer to show the distribution among EJ populations. This tool will both guide the agency's planning and resource allocation and serve as helpful information for the public.

DCR is also focused on capturing investments it makes in its properties that are not within an EJ population but that serve significant EJ populations. Horseneck Beach State Reservation and Blue Hills Reservation are good examples of day-use visitation. Neither property is located within an EJ population, but many visitors come from EJ populations. Similarly, DCR's camping program has access to zip codes for campers at particular properties and will identify EJ populations

represented. DCR will explore other methods to build its understanding of who uses DCR properties and what types of activities are most popular, with the goal of increasing service to EJ populations.

DCR will develop an enhancement to Green Docket (DCR's internal environmental permit review process) that will identify EJ populations and whether a particular project is within the EJ threshold for environmental review established by the EEA Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office.

DCR has initiated an effort to identify its vacant historic buildings in EJ populations as a first phase to explore for potential activation by DCR or partners to provide community benefits, such as walking paths, canoe/bike rentals, interpretive programming. DCR's partnership with Mass Audubon at the historic Powder House at Magazine Beach in Cambridge is an example of a reactivated historic building that provides public benefit (albeit not in an EJ population).

DCR offers a number of programs that specifically serve environmental justice populations and, where possible, seeks to recruit and employ local residents to carry out these programs. Some examples are described below.

- **Greening the Gateway Cities Urban Canopy Program:** This program increases tree canopy in gateway cities and uses environmental justice as a key criterion when selecting specific geographical areas to increase the urban canopy. Increasing tree coverage contributes to reducing energy costs, mitigating heat island effects, improving the health and well-being of residents, and contributing to neighborhood aesthetics, all of which enhance communities. Since its inception, this popular program, established in 2014, has resulted in over 30,000 trees planted in 14 cities. DCR is planning on expanding to more cities.

The GGC model relies on local recruitment in the gateway cities to stand up planting teams in each community. This opportunity, which spans the spring and fall seasons, provides seasonal jobs for local people to learn new marketable skills and enhances communities. GGC Tree Team staff have gone on to hold jobs in local DPWs, landscaping businesses, and public safety positions.

- **DCR Bureau of Forestry's Wood Utilization Program** established wood banks in three communities, two of which are EJ populations (Athol and Montague). The wood bank provides free wood to residents to use as a fuel source. Wood comes from trees that have fallen or been cut by the town. As part of the wood bank program, DCR helps recruit volunteers from the community to keep the wood bank operational by cutting and piling wood for participants.
- As part of its **Waterfront Safety Program**, every year, DCR hires approximately 550 lifeguards to work at its 32 deep water pools, two wading pools, and 30 coastal and **inland** beaches across the Commonwealth. The agency undertakes a broad and active outreach to recruit lifeguards, seeking to employ young people from the many EJ populations in which DCR pools and beaches are located. DCR reaches out via social

media, contacting swim coaches at area high schools, reaching out to placement offices at area colleges, and contacting area swim teams and clubs via a network of YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other indoor pool facilities. Along with competitive compensation, the agency also provides free lifeguard certification for qualified candidates who commit to work for DCR during the summer season.

- DCR sponsors the SWIM initiative **Safe Water Initiative Mass** to support waterfront safety. To date, the agency has awarded eight grants totaling over \$320,000 to municipal and community organizations to offer free Learn to Swim lessons for children and adults. As part of recruitment of instructors for the Learn to Swim program at DCR pools, outreach is focused on residents of EJ populations where pools are located.
- **DCR's Urban Challenge Grants** provide funding for communities to improve and protect their urban forests. These 50/50 matching grants help develop, grow, and sustain programs that plant, protect, and maintain a community's public tree resources and develop partnerships with residents and community institutions. The Urban Challenge grants prioritize EJ populations by only requiring a 25% match from EJ populations rather than the 50% required for non-EJ populations.
- DCR's partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources launched the **Growing Wild Movement** in 2021. The program entered its second phase in 2022 and has selected an EJ population, Lowell, to design, plant, and enhance pollinator gardens at Lowell Public Schools. The initiative will create two pollinator garden, enhance 12 existing gardens, and be integrated into the curriculum with existing community garden efforts so students can learn about the importance of pollinators in growing fruits and vegetables.
- DCR's Office of Cultural Resources launched a **First People, First Stewards – Partnership for Change** initiative to best integrate Indigenous voices and influence the interpretation of properties and how the agency approaches Indigenous interests. The initiative will first reimagine how we tell stories to be inclusive and would look to recruit Indigenous people to shape and deliver the stories.

## Staff Training

DCR will offer staff training in environmental justice principles and elements of DCR's EJ Strategy. The goals of the training are to promote awareness of environmental justice and, ultimately, to provide agency staff with the best background and tools to advance environmental justice both in carrying out their individual roles and in actively supporting the agency's EJ Strategy. By deepening the organization's collective knowledge and understanding of the needs of vulnerable populations, environmental justice neighborhoods, and under-served areas of the Commonwealth, we will better serve the public and realize our mission to the fullest.

## Enforcement of this EEA EJ Strategy

For any environmental justice concerns, complaints, compliments, or ideas, or to find out more about our agency environmental, energy, and climate justice efforts, please contact EEA's Office of Environmental Justice and Equity or the contact below.

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