



State of Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Environmental Justice Criteria Policy Brief

Clean Water State Revolving Fund 2022 Rulemaking Advisory Committee Meeting 1

To: Oregon CWSRF 2022 Rulemaking Advisory Committee

From: CWSRF program staff

RE: Environmental justice criteria policy brief

Date: July 15, 2022

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality Clean Water State Revolving Fund (DEQ CWSRF) intends to use environmental justice criteria to inform how it targets financial assistance. This policy brief defines environmental justice, presents the environmental justice criteria under consideration, discusses their rationale, and summarizes how the criteria will be used by the program.

The definition of “environmental justice”

House Bill 4077 (2021)¹ provides guidelines to natural resources agencies, including DEQ CWSRF, regarding the prioritization of environmental justice when implementing programs and policies. HB 4077 defines “environmental justice” as “the equal protection from environmental and health risks, fair treatment, and meaningful involvement in decision making of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, immigration status, income, or other identities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn, and practice spirituality and culture.”

Environmental justice criteria

CWSRF staff is considering the following metrics to identify communities that are disproportionately burdened by water pollution:

1. Economically distressed
 - a. Low income
 - b. Higher unemployment
2. Health burdened
 - a. Low life expectancy
 - b. Elevated health risks
3. Pollution burdened
 - a. Located near waterbody contaminated by pollutants
 - b. Located near a facility that has a compliance violation

¹ H.B. 4077, 81st Oregon Legislative Assembly. (2022).
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2022R1/Measures/Overview/HB4077>.

Rationale for environmental justice metrics

By targeting assistance to communities that are economically distressed, health burdened, or pollution burdened, DEQ CWSRF will address the disproportionate effects that water pollution has on communities. *Economically distressed* communities face a greater hardship raising the revenue necessary to pay for infrastructure projects. *Health burdened* communities are more susceptible to the negative effects of environmental pollution. And because of their proximity to an impaired water body, *pollution burdened* communities bear a disproportionate amount of the negative consequences of water pollution. By providing targeted assistance to these communities, DEQ CWSRF will help advance the agency's goal of ensuring that all communities are equally protected from environmental and health risks.²

How DEQ CWSRF will use environmental justice metrics

The environmental justice metrics will inform the following policies and activities:

- Scoring and ranking of loan applications
- Targeting outreach to communities
- Targeting technical assistance to communities
- Determining principal forgiveness awards

Alternative formats

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.

² Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, "Environmental Justice," available from <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/about-us/Pages/Environmental-Justice.aspx>.