

# Office of Environmental Justice

Pennsylvania Brownfields Conference  
April 2026

JOSH SHAPIRO, GOVERNOR | JESSICA SHIRLEY, SECRETARY



Pennsylvania  
Department of  
Environmental Protection

# Department of Environmental Protection, Environmental Justice Overview

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# Our Agency

## Who We Are:

- We are: **2,600+ dedicated public servants**
- We are: Engineers, Geologists, Sanitarians, Nuclear Health Physicists, Clerks, Attorneys, Public Administrators, Community Organizers, and more
- We are: committed to upholding the Mission, Vision, and Values of DEP



# Our Agency

## What We Do:

- More than **86,000 miles of streams and rivers**
- Nearly **8,000 drinking water facilities** that provide clean drinking water to 12 million Pennsylvanians.
- Over **217,000 oil and gas wells** – and nearly **27,000 orphaned and abandoned wells**
- Almost **2,000 active coal mines and quarries**
- Perform **over 500,000 laboratory tests** every year



# Our Mission

The Department of Environmental Protection's mission is to protect Pennsylvania's air, land and water resources and to provide for the health and safety of its residents and visitors, consistent with the rights and duties established under the Environmental Rights Amendment (Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution).

We will work as partners with individuals, organizations, governments, and businesses to conserve and restore our natural resources and to address all current and future environmental challenges including climate change and environmental justice.





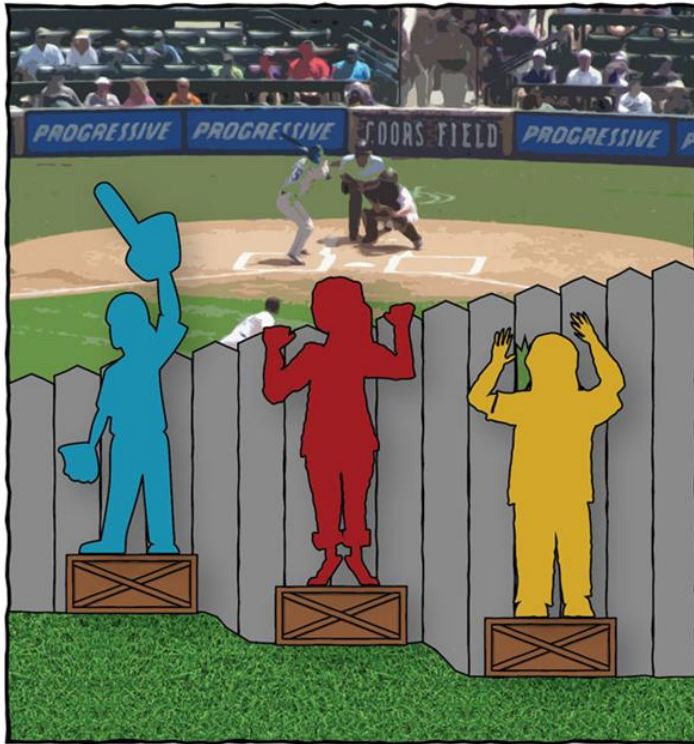
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# Environmental Justice Defined

“Environmental justice means the **just treatment and meaningful involvement** of all people, regardless of income, wealth, race, color, national origin, area of residence, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other 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. It further involves the **prevention of future environmental injustice and the redress of historic environmental injustice.**”



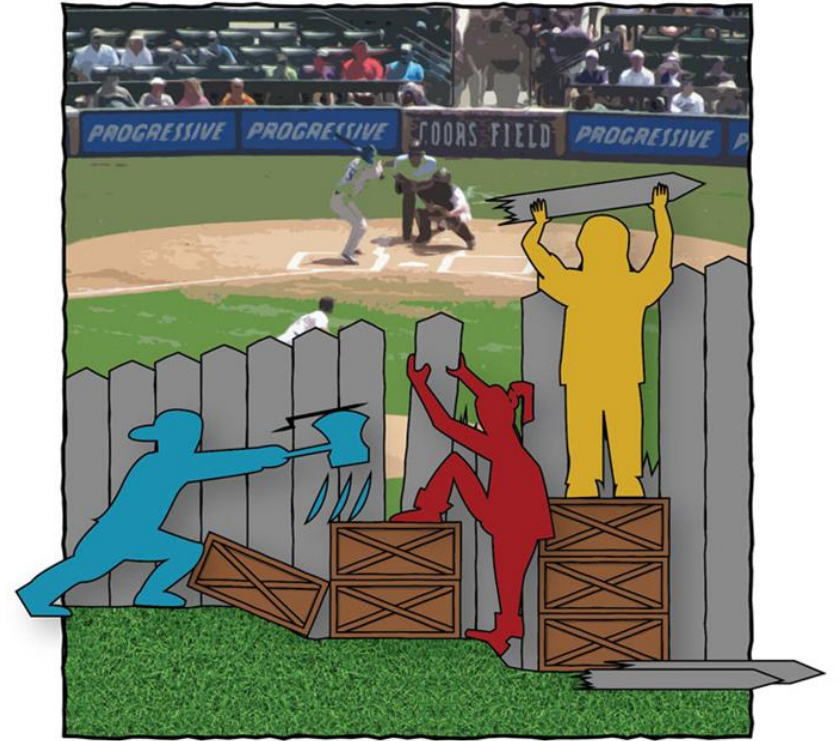
# Equality, Equity, & Justice



**EQUALITY**



**EQUITY**



**JUSTICE**



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# The Science Behind Disproportionate Environmental Impacts



**Environmental injustice  
is a force multiplier**

## DRIVERS

- Built Environment: Proximity to pollution sources (e.g., stationary and mobile air emissions)
- Natural Environment: Disasters (e.g., wildfires, heat waves, pandemics)
- Social Environment: Health disparities (e.g., asthma, heart disease, hypertension, diabetes)



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# History of Environmental Justice



Warren County,  
North Carolina (1982)



United Church of  
Christ Study (1987)



First People of Color  
Environmental  
Leadership Summit  
(1991)



Executive Order  
12898 (1994)

The EJ movement, started by people (primarily people of color) to address inequitable environmental protection and environmental services in their communities was grounded in civil rights and the environmental movement. The movement builds on the lived experience of disproportionately impacted communities. The work of these early advocates paved the way for program development starting in the early 1990's, over the past 30 years, have resulted in significant progress at all levels of government.

Graphics Source: [U.S. EPA](#)

# History of Environmental Justice Federal Executive Administration

Revoked Core EJ Orders: Rescinded EO 12898 and Justice 40—eliminating federal accountability for EJ.

Abolished EJ Programs: Ordered termination of agency EJ offices and staff positions.

Defunded EJ Initiatives: Canceled \$1.7 billion in air, water, and climate justice grants.

Erased Public Data: Removed EPA's EJScreen and other transparency tools.



# Roots of EJ in Pennsylvania

- Organizing of Chester in early 1990s
- Environmental Risk Study by EPA in conjunction with DER in 1993
- Chester residents (CRCQL) lawsuit against DEP in 1996
- DEP Environmental Justice Work Group (EJWG) created in 1999 Report and Recommendations released in 2001





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# Roots of EJ in Pennsylvania

- In 2002, the Office of Environmental Advocate (OEA) and the Environmental Justice Advisory Board (EJAB) was created.
- In 2015, the Office of Environmental Advocacy was renamed as the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ).
- The 1996 Title VI lawsuit, although dismissed, elevated national awareness of environmental racism.
- Lessons from Chester directly shaped DEP's establishment of environmental justice focused offices and advisory structures.
- These milestones mark the institutionalization of environmental justice principles within DEP policy.
- While positive, we still receive criticism from people in Chester and other places.



# Redlining

- Financial risk maps were created in accordance with their property values and racial make-up
  - Communities with a higher proportion of nonwhite residents were deemed inherently risky – and outlined in red.
  - This discriminatory system was widespread and prevented nonwhite residents from obtaining mortgages.
- The impacts of redlining are still being felt today:
  - Homeownership rates
  - Loss of generational wealth
  - Climate change impacts
  - Public health impacts

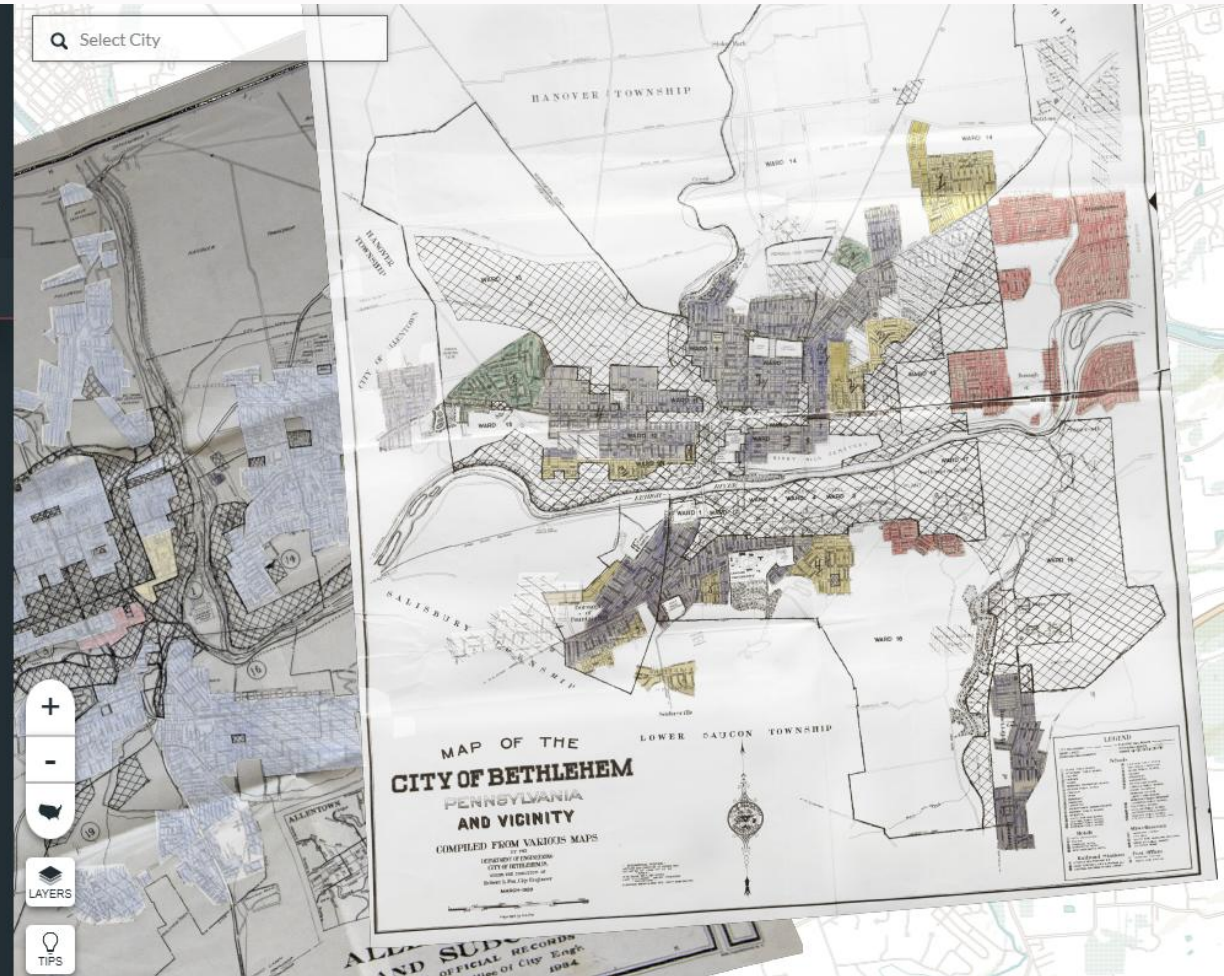
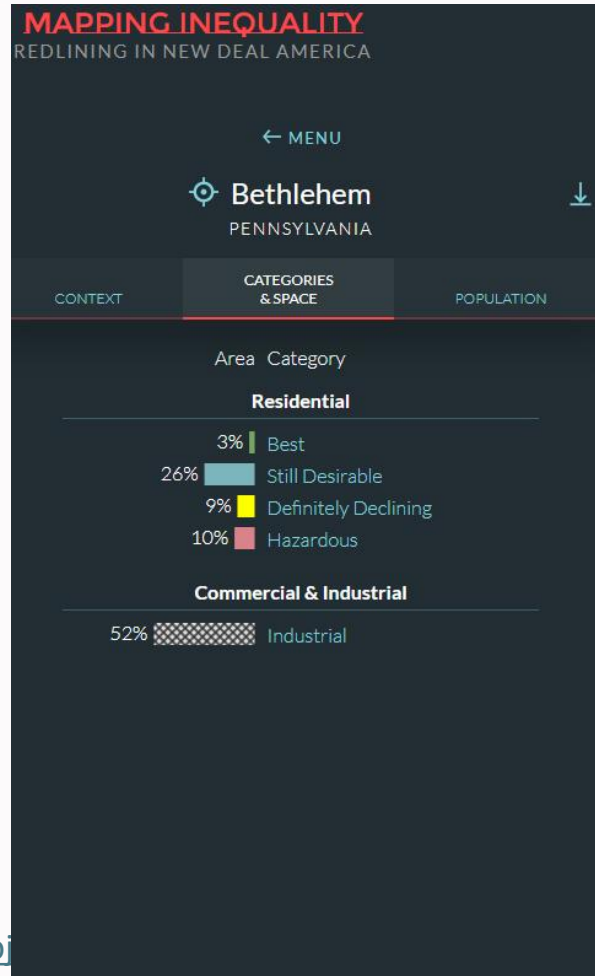


Rothstein, R. (2018). *The color of law*. Liveright Publishing Corporation.



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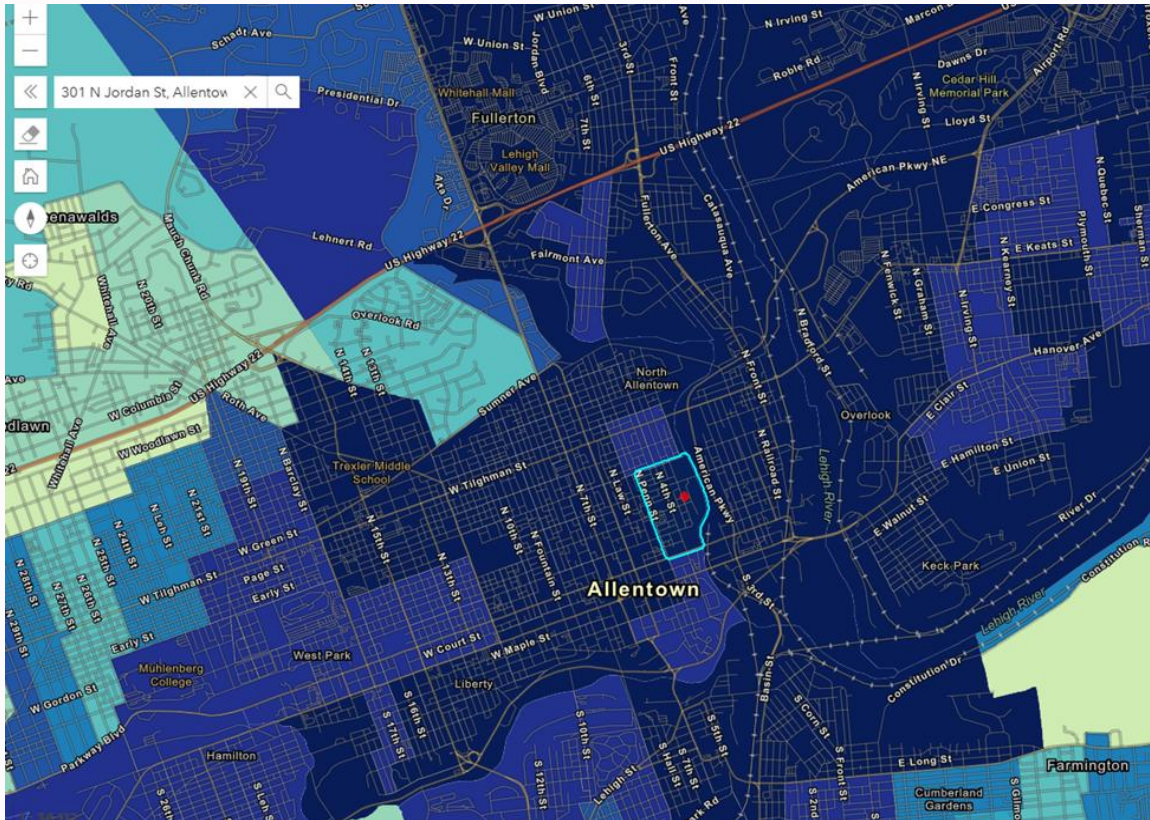
# Redlining in Northeast PA



Graphics Source: [Mapping Inequality Project](#)



# Examples of EJ in Northeast



- **Community Concerns:**
  - Warehouse Distribution Centers, Landfills, loss of open space, air quality, water quality, and CO2 emissions from trucks.
- **PennEnviroScreen**
  - For the City of Allentown, top environmental exposures include: 99% for toxic air emission, and for environmental effects Land remediation 96%.

# 2021 Executive Order

- An [Executive Order](#) on environmental justice was issued on October 28, 2021.
- Formally establishes the Office of Environmental Justice.
- Formally establishes the Environmental Justice Advisory Board
- Creates an Environmental Justice Interagency Council
- Outlines activities that executive branch agencies should take to further environmental justice goals.





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# How DEP has Prioritized EJ

- Appointed a Special Deputy of Environmental Justice to lead the Office of Environmental Justice at the Executive Level.
- Added Environmental Justice Regional Coordinators in each of DEP's six regions.
- Published The Environmental Justice Policy and PennEnviroScreen mapping tool
- Developed proactive community outreach and engagement program



# Environmental Justice Policy Overview

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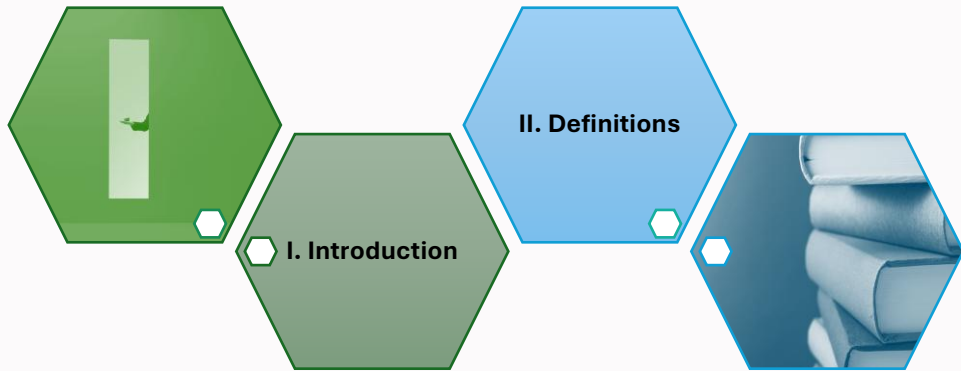
# Policy Sections & Focus



- I. Introduction
- II. Definitions
- III. Environmental Justice Area Criteria
- IV. Proactive Community Engagement
- V. Enhanced Public Participation
- VI. Inspections, Compliance, and Enforcement
- VII. Community Development and Investment
- VIII. Climate Initiatives
- IX. Policy Updates



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# Policy Sections & Focus

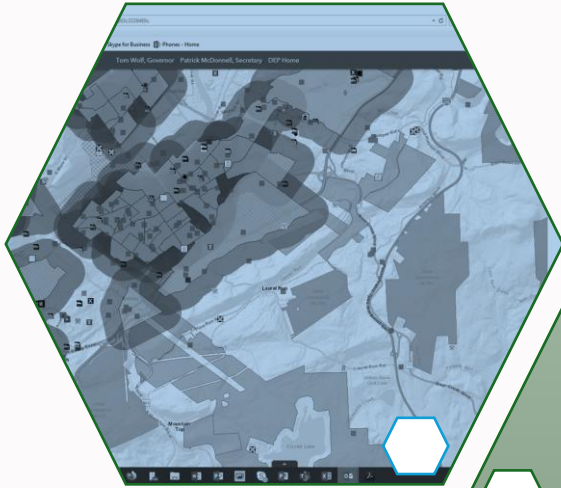
- I. Introduction
  - Background and history on the policy
- II. Definitions
  - Robust definitions section defines terms ranging from applicant to public meeting.
  - Assist in clarifying the document and ensuring that it is similarly interpreted by the public, DEP staff, and permit applicants.
  - Enhances the overall readability and accessibility of the document.



# Policy Sections & Focus

## III. Environmental Justice Areas

- Describes where the policy applies
- Refers to Appendix B for detailed mapping of where the policy will apply to allow for easy updating.
- Introduces PennEnviroScreen as the tool for researching these areas.



III. Environmental Justice  
Criteria

# EJ Areas and Criteria

- PennEnviroScreen is DEP's Environmental Justice mapping tool
- Provides a snapshot of undue environmental burden on vulnerable communities
- Combines Pollution Burden and Population Characteristics data to identify EJ Areas
- Indicates where the EJ Policy applies





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# PennEnviroScreen



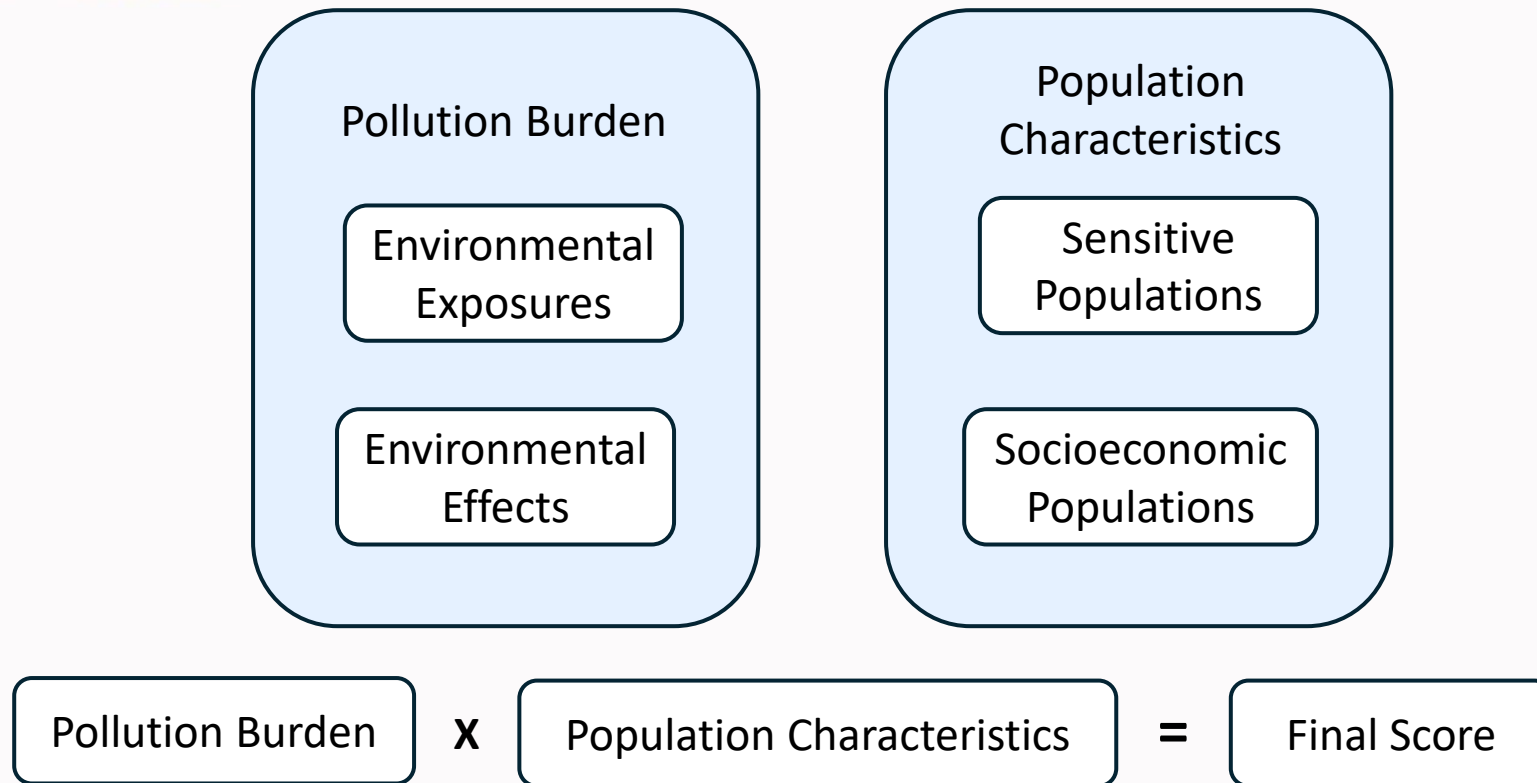
This model combines

Pollution Burden  
+  
Population Characteristics

To identify Environmental Justice (EJ) Areas in accordance with the EJ Policy, which will increase public participation in the permitting process of proposed facilities



# EJ Areas and Criteria



An environmental justice area is a place that has disproportionate impacts of pollution burden on certain vulnerable populations, as defined by the Policy.

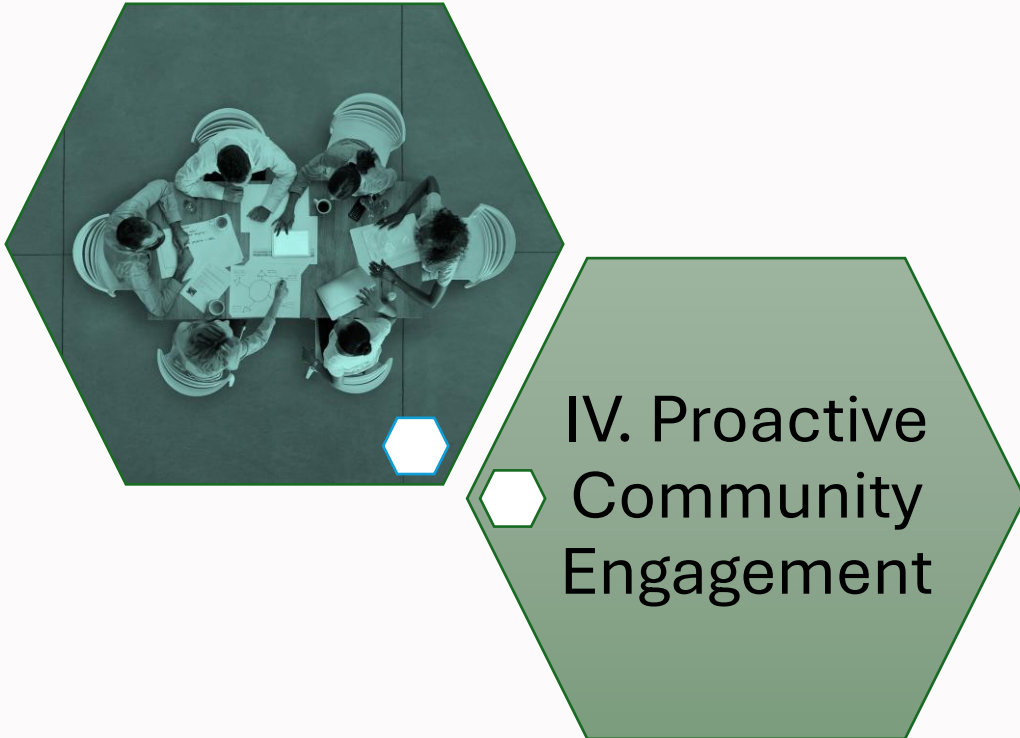


# EJ Areas and Criteria

Pollution Burden: Environmental Exposures	Pollution Burden: Environmental Effects	Population Characteristics: Sensitive Populations	Population Characteristics: Socioeconomic Population
Ozone	Oil Gas Locations (Conventional Wells)	Asthma	Low Educational Attainment
PM2.5	Oil Gas Locations (Hydraulic Fracturing/ Unconventional Wells)	No Health Insurance	Linguistic Isolation
Diesel Particulate Matter	Proximity to Railroads	Cancer	Housing-Burdened Low-Income Households
Toxic Air Emissions	Land Remediation	Disability	Poverty
Toxic Water Emissions	Hazardous Waste and Storage Sites	Heart Disease	Unemployment
Pesticides	Municipal Waste Sites		Race
Traffic Density	Coal Mining		Age Over 64
Compressor Stations	Impaired Lakes and Streams		Age Under 5
Children's Lead Risk	Abandoned Mining Concerns		
	Flood Risk		

# Policy Sections & Focus

- IV. Proactive Community Engagement
- Reaching communities before an environmental project or crisis.
  - Centering on community voices





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# EJ Policy Overview

Throughout the Policy there is a common theme of Proactive Community Engagement:

DEP seeks to "build long-lasting relationships with people and communities outside of individual projects" and to "increase strategic community education, outreach, engagement and capacity building trust through intentional action. This policy also recommends DEP reach out proactively to communities to help understand their concerns before issuing permits for new facilities, to explain DEP's inspection and compliance strategies, and to provide communities with the tools to help address environmental issues."





# Policy Sections & Focus

## V. Enhanced Public Participation

Details the Enhanced Public Participation Process

- A. Projects Covered (**To which projects** it can be applied in the permitting context)
  - 1. Trigger Projects (Specified in Appendix C)
  - 2. Opt-in Projects (Suggested permits in Appendix C)
- B. Enhanced Process (**How** it is applied in the permitting process)
  - 1. Pre-Project Community Outreach
  - 2. Language Access
  - 3. Permit Application
    - i. Public Participation Strategy
    - ii. Pre-Application Meeting
    - iii. Notice
    - iv. Public Meetings
    - v. Public Comment
    - vi. Technical Support
  - 4. Communication After the DEP Authorization or Permit Issuance



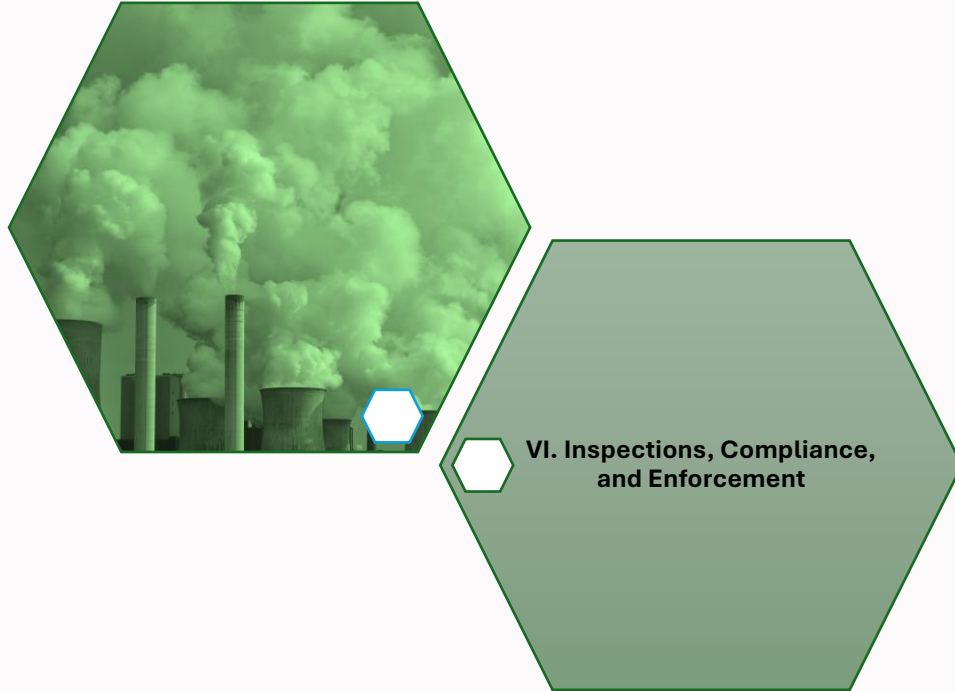
V. Enhanced  
Public  
Participation



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# Policy Sections & Focus

- VI. Inspections, Compliance, and Enforcement
- Moving beyond public participation within DEP's existing regulatory authority
  - Prioritizing of Competing Demands
  - Civil Penalty Enhancements
  - Use of Civil Penalties
  - Community Environmental Projects
  - Filing Complaints





# Inspection, Compliance, Enforcement

What are environmental complaints and emergencies? Here are just a few examples:

## Environmental Emergencies

- Hazardous chemical spills
- Sewage overflows
- Radiation leaks
- Fish kills
- Pipeline breaks or oil spills
- Drinking water contamination

## Environmental Complaints

- Foul odors
- Excessive industrial emissions
- Concerns about discharges of pollutants into bodies of water
- Improper disposal of chemicals
- Unauthorized wetland filling or destruction
- Abandon mines and well pads

If you have environmental health concerns, you can also report them to the PA Department of Health:

- Phone: 717-787-3350
- Email: [env.health.concern@pa.gov](mailto:env.health.concern@pa.gov)



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# Inspection, Compliance, Enforcement



To report an environmental complaint to DEP, submit a complaint online at [greenport.pa.gov/obPublic/EnvironmentalComplaintForm/](https://greenport.pa.gov/obPublic/EnvironmentalComplaintForm/)



OR submit an environmental complaint by calling 866-255-5158



To report an environmental emergency incident to DEP call 800-541-2050

Anyone can report an environmental complaint. All reports are confidential.



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# Policy Sections & Focus

## VII. Community Development and Investments

- Targeting grants
- Promoting brownfield redevelopment



**VII. Community  
Development and  
Investments**



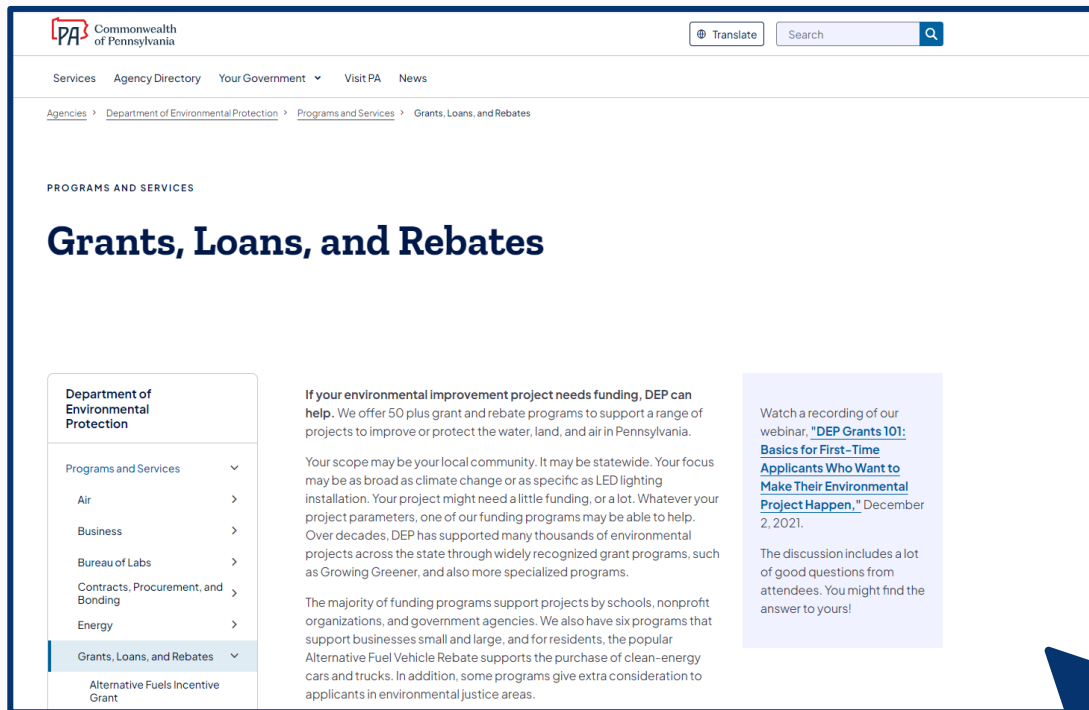
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# Grants and Funding

The DEP Grants Management Policy provides additional consideration for applications that support community-driven projects that emphasize EJ and are in EJ Areas.



# DEP Grants



The screenshot shows the DEP website's 'Grants, Loans, and Rebates' page. The header includes the PA logo, navigation links, and a search bar. The main content area features a sidebar with a menu for 'Department of Environmental Protection' and 'Programs and Services'. The 'Grants, Loans, and Rebates' menu item is selected. The main text explains that DEP offers 50+ grant and rebate programs to support various projects. A callout box on the right promotes a webinar recording titled 'DEP Grants 101: Basics for First-Time Applicants Who Want to Make Their Environmental Project Happen'.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Services Agency Directory Your Government Visit PA News

Agencies > Department of Environmental Protection > Programs and Services > Grants, Loans, and Rebates

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

## Grants, Loans, and Rebates

**Department of Environmental Protection**

Programs and Services

- Air
- Business
- Bureau of Labs
- Contracts, Procurement, and Bonding
- Energy
- Grants, Loans, and Rebates**
  - Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant

If your environmental improvement project needs funding, DEP can help. We offer 50 plus grant and rebate programs to support a range of projects to improve or protect the water, land, and air in Pennsylvania.

Your scope may be your local community. It may be statewide. Your focus may be as broad as climate change or as specific as LED lighting installation. Your project might need a little funding, or a lot. Whatever your project parameters, one of our funding programs may be able to help. Over decades, DEP has supported many thousands of environmental projects across the state through widely recognized grant programs, such as Growing Greener, and also more specialized programs.

The majority of funding programs support projects by schools, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. We also have six programs that support businesses small and large, and for residents, the popular Alternative Fuel Vehicle Rebate supports the purchase of clean-energy cars and trucks. In addition, some programs give extra consideration to applicants in environmental justice areas.

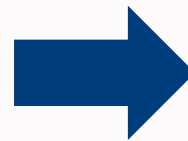
Watch a recording of our webinar, "[DEP Grants 101: Basics for First-Time Applicants Who Want to Make Their Environmental Project Happen](#)," December 2, 2021.

The discussion includes a lot of good questions from attendees. You might find the answer to yours!

DEP offers a variety of grants for residents, businesses, schools, nonprofit organizations, and local and state governments. Check out what programs are accepting applications now by visiting: [www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/grants-loans-rebates.html](http://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/grants-loans-rebates.html)

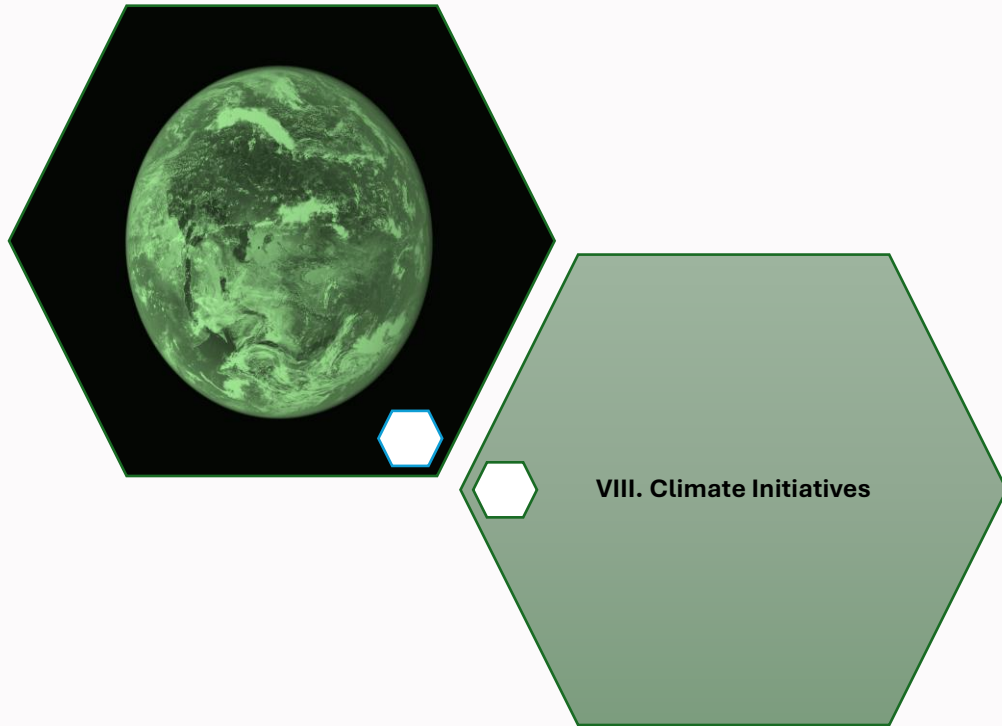
# Brownfields

- A brownfield is a property where the reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.
- DEP will continue to prioritize EJ Areas in its collaborative work with state, local, and federal agencies, non-profit, and private sector partners on brownfield redevelopment.





# Policy Sections & Focus



## VIII. Climate Initiatives

- Climate Action Plan involvement
- Climate adaptation
- Integrates EJ considerations into climate investments
- Directs DEP to engage in public involvement that integrates the stated needs and concerns of EJ communities

# Climate Change and EJ

## Section VIII of EJ Policy: Climate Initiatives

- Ensures climate-related initiatives consider and prioritize communities disproportionately impacted by climate change.
- Ensures the Climate Action Plan developed under the Pennsylvania Climate Change Act (Act 70 of 2008) addresses climate adaptation planning for EJ Areas.
- Identifies and/or evaluates strategies to address disproportionate impacts of climate change for EJ Area residents.
- Considers preparing for and responding to climate-related impacts and disasters.

Want to learn more about how climate change is impacting PA?  
Visit: [gis.dep.pa.gov/ClimateChange/index.html](https://gis.dep.pa.gov/ClimateChange/index.html)



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# Climate Change and EJ

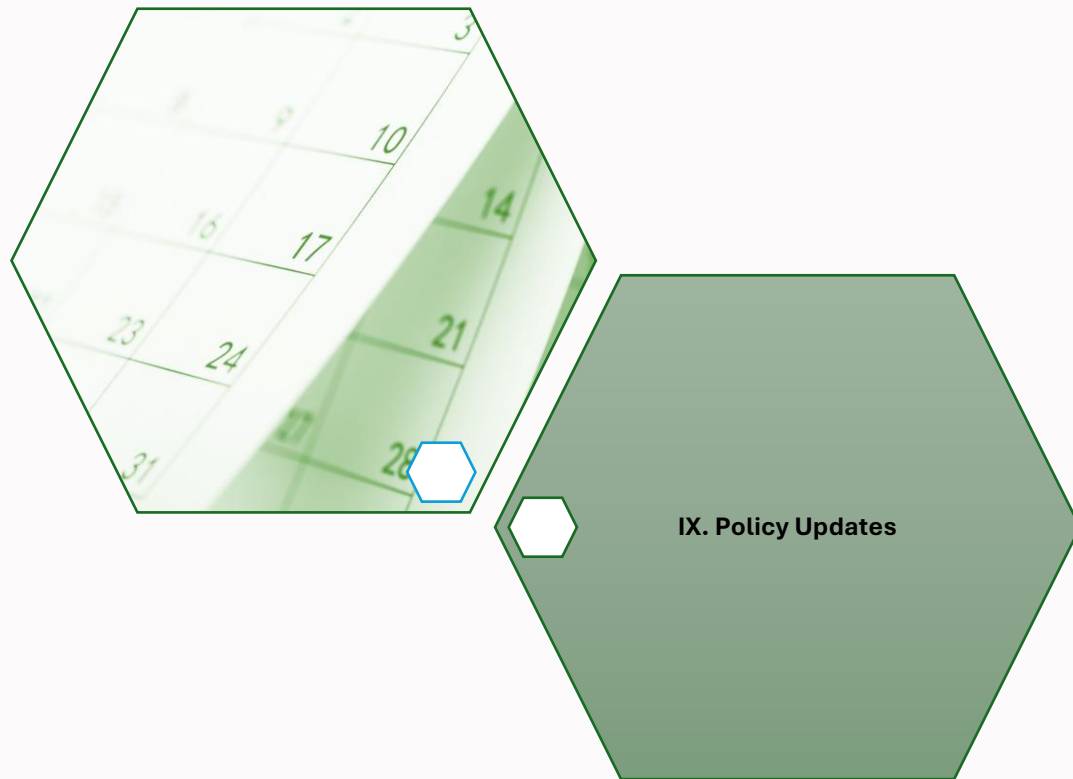
- EJ Areas are disproportionately exposed to climate hazards, such as flooding and heatwaves.
- EJ Areas have limited access to tools to adapt to climate impacts and transition to cleaner energy to slow down climate change.
- DEP will ensure climate-related initiatives consider and prioritize communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. This includes:
  - DEP's Climate Action Plan
  - Funding and investments for climate initiatives
  - Other agency climate priorities



# Policy Sections & Focus

## IX. Policy Updates

- Requires review of the EJ policy for updates every 5 years
- Update EJ area identification and mapping every 2 years, based on latest data



# Connect with the Office of Environmental Justice

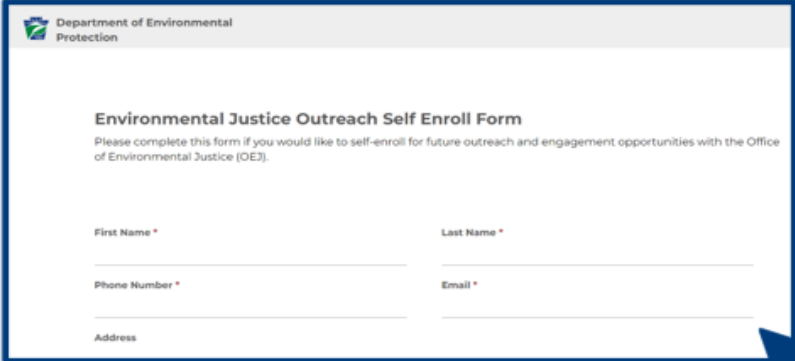
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# Stay Informed

Complete the Environmental Justice Outreach Self Enroll Form to enroll for future outreach and engagement opportunities with DEP:  
[pacedcitpowerapps.powerappsportals.us/services/Environmental-Justice-Outreach-Self-Enroll/](https://pacedcitpowerapps.powerappsportals.us/services/Environmental-Justice-Outreach-Self-Enroll/)



The screenshot shows a web form titled "Environmental Justice Outreach Self Enroll Form" from the Department of Environmental Protection. The form includes a header with the DEP logo and name, followed by the title and a brief instruction: "Please complete this form if you would like to self-enroll for future outreach and engagement opportunities with the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ)." Below this are several input fields: "First Name \*", "Last Name \*", "Phone Number \*", "Email \*", and "Address". A blue arrow points to the bottom right corner of the form area.

And sign up for the EJ Newsletter:  
[www.dep.pa.gov/EJ](http://www.dep.pa.gov/EJ) and click the "Sign Up for Our Newsletter" button





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# Get In Touch

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# Get In Touch

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*Sign up for*



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