

ITRC & Environmental Justice – A Commitment to Our Values

Environmental Justice is making its way to the forefront of today's environmental community following decades of documentation detailing the disproportionate burden placed on low-income and minority communities by pollution and environmental hazards. Failure to address EJ concerns has led to grave consequences for low-income or minority communities; without a voice, human health in these communities can suffer greatly as a result of poorly informed environmental decision-making.

Defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as "...the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies," EJ can only be achieved when everyone has "the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work." (USEPA, 2020a). Since its inception in the early 1980s, the field of EJ has grown to encompass a broad spectrum of other environmentally inclusive subjects, concerns and, ultimately, legislation; some of the terminology commonly used today includes Social Equity, Social Impact, and Environmental Equity.

Signed on February 16th, 1994, Executive Order 12898 officially recognized EJ on a federal level, directing agencies to focus attention on the environmental and human health effects of federal actions on minority and low-income populations (USEPA 2020b). Further executive action has been seen recently with the signing of Executive Order 13990, on January 20, 2021, which established White House and Inter-Agency Environmental Justice Councils, as well as the Justice40 Initiative for federal identification and investment in disadvantaged communities (Federal Register, 2021). Another milestone was met when New Jersey became the first state in the nation to adopt legislation on permitting requirements based on EJ. Signed on September 18, 2020, Senate Bill 232 requires the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection "to evaluate the environmental and public health impacts of certain facilities on overburdened communities when reviewing certain permit applications." (O'Connor, 2020).

ITRC will continue to develop reference material for project managers and environmental professionals to consider in the use of current and future ITRC guidance materials in environmental decision-making and project design. ITRC will include the principals of EJ in future environmental products – working towards our mission while paying express attention to our core values of diversity, equity, inclusion and transparency. ITRC is excited to be a part of addressing environmental justice and bringing more voices to addressing the national and local environmental challenges.

ITRC Organizational Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Diversity, equity, inclusion and transparency are embodied within the core values of ITRC. They are fulfilled in the pursuit of ITRC's mission and vision. ITRC's Membership Code of Conduct requires every member to benefit from team consensus and collaboration. ITRC requires diverse perspectives that provide the knowledge and skills to address all environmental challenges in pursuit of developing innovative products.

References

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- USEPA (a). Environmental Justice. (2020, December 07). Retrieved December 30, 2020, from <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>
- USEPA (b). Summary of Executive Order 12898 – federal actions to address environmental justice in minority populations and low-income populations. (2020, July 23). Retrieved May 07, 2021, from <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-executive-order-12898-federal-actions-address-environmental-justice>
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