

2021-2022



EPA

United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency

# REGION 1 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PLAN



**Strengthen Compliance with Environmental Laws in Communities Overburdened by Pollution**



**Incorporate EJ Considerations into all of Region 1's Work**



**Engage in Overburdened and Underserved Communities**



**Invest in Overburdened and Underserved Communities**



**The United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) longstanding mission is to protect human health and the environment.**

In April 2021, EPA Administrator Michael Regan called upon the Agency to be intentional in its efforts to protect the health and environment of all Americans, including those historically marginalized, overburdened, underserved, and living with the legacy of structural racism.

The Administrator requested that every EPA office and region consciously and affirmatively pursue justice as we jointly confront environmental and climate challenges with our Tribal, federal, state and local partners. The Administrator exhorted EPA to be a role model among federal agencies and deploy all of the policy and legal tools at our disposal to incorporate environmental justice (EJ) considerations in our analysis, rulemaking, permitting, enforcement, grantmaking, operations, disaster response and recovery, and other activities. EPA defines EJ 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.

Region 1 recognizes that more can be done to embed EJ principles and priorities into our work to protect human health and the environment. This EJ Action Plan prioritizes short term actions that Region 1 will continue or embark upon using existing resources in 2021 and 2022 that respond to Administrator Regan's priorities. Region 1 is committed to making this a living document. We are continuing to develop and expand our EJ work; we will adjust this plan as we develop new approaches and evaluate the effectiveness of existing efforts. The Region is interested in hearing from colleagues, partners and external stakeholders about additional ideas and recommendations for how to achieve EJ in New England.

EPA Region 1 will take short term actions in the priority areas to address disproportionately high human and environmental health risks and impacts in New England communities whose residents are predominately of color, Indigenous, and/or low-income.

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# Strengthen Compliance with Environmental Laws in Communities Overburdened by Pollution (4 Actions)

EPA Region 1 is responsible for developing, implementing, and overseeing enforcement and compliance assurance of federal environmental statutes in the New England states. Region 1 works closely with our Tribal and state partners in this effort. Region 1 will explore innovative ways to use our compliance monitoring and enforcement tools to protect communities overburdened by pollution through increasing inspections and taking follow-up enforcement actions, as appropriate. Under this plan, the Region will:

**1. Prioritize** compliance inspections in communities with EJ concerns, with a goal of increasing inspections in overburdened and vulnerable communities. Region 1's goal is to conduct 25% of compliance inspections in communities with EJ concerns in 2021 and revise targets in 2022 (ongoing 2021 through 2022).

**2. Implement** a geographic initiative in Hartford and Fairfield Counties, Connecticut to improve compliance with federal lead-based paint rules (Lead Disclosure/1018 and Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule/RRP) and provide multimedia lead outreach and education (begin Summer 2021, conclude Fall 2022).

**3. Explore** a future cross-program geographic initiative focused on communities with EJ concerns, as identified by tools and information such as, but not limited to, EPA's EJ screening tool, EJ Screen, to identify inspection targets and compliance assistance opportunities (identify potential focus areas by the end of 2021, commence initiative in 2022).

**4. Increase** efforts to resolve non-compliance by seeking remedies through settlement agreements that have tangible environmental benefits for and address communities with EJ concerns, including the use of Supplemental Environmental Projects (SEPs) as appropriate (initiate in 2021, ongoing through 2022).



## Incorporate EJ Considerations into all of Region 1's Work (19 Actions)

Region 1 has made progress integrating EJ into our work in New England and the next phase of delivering EJ requires new approaches and coordination. Region 1 will expand internal capacity and cross-program coordination, strengthen existing infrastructure and networks with our Tribal and state partners and expand internal understanding of adverse and cumulative impacts of environmental, health and socio-economic stressors in overburdened and vulnerable communities. Under this plan, the Region will:

**1. Develop and refine** internal structures that support EJ integration, including the EJ Council and the newly formed EJ Team (2021-2022).

**2. Provide** training to ensure that the Region's workforce has the information, tools, skills and knowledge necessary to incorporate EJ considerations into their work (2021-2022).

**3. Work** with New England state partners to develop EJ training that meets the states' identified training needs (develop training plan and provide one training by December 2021, provide four trainings in 2022).

**4. Ensure** that the Region's workforce is aware of legal authorities and statutory flexibilities to address EJ concerns. Provide legal advice and support for outreach and funding efforts to support overburdened and underserved communities and identify and minimize legal barriers to community engagement with respect to enforcement processes (initiate in July 2021, ongoing through 2022).

**5. Explore** options to support our state partners' ability to produce outreach materials on environmental and public health issues in multiple languages in communities with EJ concerns (conclude by December 2021).

**6. Partner** with state drinking water programs to address tap sampling results above the lead action levels in communities with EJ concerns, including Boston, MA, and Providence, RI (2021-2022).

**7. Conduct** thirteen workshops with water utility operators in communities with EJ concerns to advance their water systems' resilience and emergency response preparedness (eight workshops completed in 2021, five workshops completed in 2022).

**8. Deliver** nine trainings for water utility operators, state drinking water staff, consultants, and water association representatives on requirements under the current and revised Lead and Copper Rule to advance efforts to "Get the Lead Out" of communities (five workshops completed in 2021, four workshops completed in 2022).

**9. Finalize** and nationally post Region 1's "Protect Your Tap" tool to help homeowners identify lead drinking water lines that may be connected to their homes; provide outreach materials to stakeholders (complete by September 2021).

**10. Continue** to partner with the Indian Health Service to support Tribal drinking water systems in New England (2021-2022).

**11. Seek** opportunities to support the Tribes in reducing food insecurity and supporting Tribal initiatives for healthy, sustainable food source development, including agricultural practices, watershed restoration, fish passage, and aquaculture initiatives (2021-2022).

**12. Approve** updated State Capacity Development Programs which incorporate asset management efforts to help small and rural water systems in communities that may have EJ concerns (by April 2022).

**13. Use** EJ Screen and other information to identify communities with EJ concerns within the Region's National Estuary Program's (NEP) planning area and evaluate opportunities to incorporate EJ in the Region's NEP Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans (complete by December 2022).



## Incorporate EJ Considerations into all of Region 1's Work (cont.)

**14. Coordinate** with New England state beach monitoring programs to evaluate monitoring practices for beaches in or near communities with EJ concerns and explore translation services to ensure beach closure signage and other notifications are provided in languages that meet community needs (complete evaluation in 2022).

**15. Provide** outreach to firms with expiring lead-based paint RRP training certifications to promote timely re-accreditation of providers/firms who serve communities with EJ concerns (2021-2022).

**16. Rescreen** all non-federal facility Superfund cleanup sites for potential EJ concerns using EJ Screen and other information to help prioritize work and identify areas for enhanced community involvement and outreach (initiate Spring 2021, complete 2022).

**17. Work** with EPA's Federal Facility Restoration and Reuse Office to develop outreach strategies and expectations for U.S. military services who are the lead agencies for federal facility Superfund cleanup sites that may impact communities with EJ concerns. This work will include discussions regarding re-evaluating the sites using EJ Screen or another similar tool (2021-2022).

**18. Identify** potential EJ concerns at removal and pre-remedial cleanup sites using EJ Screen and other information to inform outreach, planning and implementation of work at these sites (2021-2022).

**19. Collect** data regarding underground storage tanks for incorporation in the Region's screening for potential EJ concerns in impacted communities (complete by March 2022).



## Engage in Overburdened and Underserved Communities (7 Actions)

Overburdened and underserved communities in New England have a voice and a role in improving environmental and health conditions. EPA Region 1 will identify key opportunities to listen to community concerns and seek to address those concerns through its actions. Under this plan, the Region will:

**1. Conduct** enhanced external stakeholder outreach for EPA-issued permits that impact communities with EJ concerns, including early notification of planned permitting actions, ground truthing with community members to confirm environmental and health concerns, translation and interpretation of information that meets community needs, hosting public meetings or hearings and providing extended public comment periods (ongoing, refine and expand activities through 2022).

**2. Propose** the Lower Neponset River site to EPA's National Priorities List (NPL) and, to ensure meaningful participation in the public process, conduct enhanced outreach to communities with EJ concerns, including ground truthing with community members to identify environmental and health concerns, providing translation and interpretation of information that meets community needs, and hosting public meetings. Begin responsible party search activities, to support initiation of the field investigation, if site is added to the NPL. (initiate Fall 2021, continue in 2022).

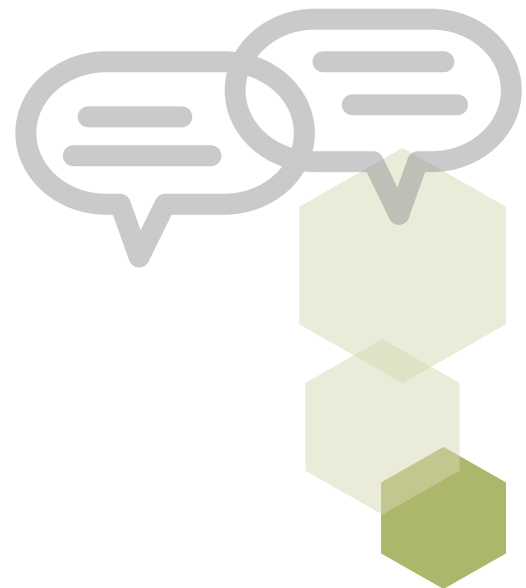
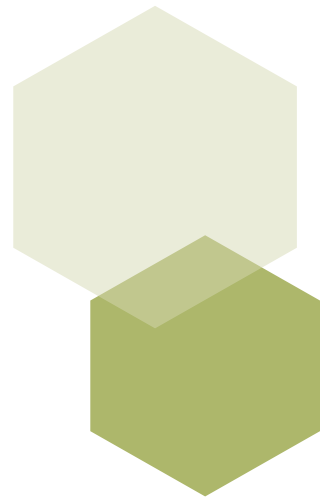
**3. Launch** quarterly e-publication on New England-focused EJ news, announcements, trainings, press releases, and resource opportunities (issue first e-publication in October 2021).

**4. Build** a network that helps New England-based EJ organizations, advocates and interested community members connect with each other (organize initial virtual meeting by October 2021 and determine schedule based on partner input, organize meetings in 2022 based on partner input).

**5. Provide** quarterly public training series on Region 1 environment and public health topics to residents and/or advocates in communities with EJ concerns. Content may include showcasing best practices, successful grant projects, topics identified through public or stakeholder feedback, and other New England projects showcasing EPA and community partners in action in communities with EJ concerns (deliver 1 training per quarter in 2022).

**6. Identify** and collaborate with local community partner(s) on a lead poisoning prevention education campaign for parents and families in Hartford and Fairfield Counties in Connecticut (identify partner and complete draft education video by October 2021).

**7. Continue** to engage in communities with EJ concerns located along the Mystic River in Massachusetts through Region 1's Mystic River Watershed Initiative and the Urban Waters Federal Partnership (2021-2022).



## Invest in Overburdened and Underserved Communities (14 Actions)

Reversing years of environmental injustice requires time and sustained investment. Region 1 will provide financial and technical resources directly to overburdened and underserved communities. Many EPA grant programs provide funding to communities with EJ concerns and Region 1 will offer technical assistance, including access to equipment loan programs to support citizen science and community revitalization. Region 1 will consider and prioritize direct and indirect benefits to communities with EJ concerns in the development of requests for grant applications and in making grant award decisions to the extent allowable by law and EPA policy, and consistent with the Administration's Justice40 Initiative. Under this plan, the Region will:

**1. Support** active grant projects addressing environmental and public health issues in communities with EJ concerns, and award new grant funds through the following EPA grant programs: Region 1's Healthy Communities Grant Program; EJ Collaborative Problem Solving Cooperative Agreements; EJ Small Grants; Brownfields Grants (including assessment, cleanup, revolving loan and environmental job training grants); Indoor Air, Diesel Emissions Reduction Act Grants; and Urban Waters Small Grants (2021-2022).

**2. Organize** and host virtual capacity building information sessions for new grant recipients whose projects impact communities with EJ concerns (2022).

**3. Coordinate** and host an annual virtual grantee showcase and networking opportunity for grantees whose projects impact communities with EJ Concerns (2022).

**4. Expand** outreach for future competitive grant opportunities on areas with greatest needs, as identified by EJ Screen and community concerns, and fewest past recipients (2021-2022).

**5. Award** grant funding to New England states and municipalities to reduce combined sewer overflows (including communities with EJ concerns along the Merrimack River), replace lead service lines (including Providence, Rhode Island), install water filtration at public schools (including Boston Public Schools), and lead testing of drinking water systems in schools and childcare facilities (by December 2021).

**6. Deliver** financial and technical support to Youth and the Environment summer internship programs for high school students in Lowell, Massachusetts, and explore possible sources of dedicated, permanent funding to continue the program in Lowell and expand it to other communities with EJ concerns in New England (2021-2022).

**7. Prioritize** awarding Wetland Program Development Grants for protection of waters in or associated with communities with EJ concerns (by June 2021).

**8. Focus** 50% of the Region's stormwater toolbox loan program in communities with EJ concerns (meet goal by end of 2022).

**9. Loan** particulate matter sensors to states focused on investigating air quality issues in communities with EJ concerns (2021-2022).

**10. Deploy** EPA's Mobile Lab to support the Region's lead poisoning prevention activities (2021-2022).

**11. Work** with state partners to expand EJ commitments in state Performance Partnership Agreements, in accordance with EPA's statutory authority (2022).

**12. Offer** Technical Assistance to Brownfields support to communities with EJ concerns under the new grant awarded to the University of Connecticut (2021-2022).

**13. Prioritize** Targeted Brownfields Assessments/technical assistance projects for communities with EJ concerns (2021-2022).

**14. Supply** EPA technical assistance resources that help increase understanding of the science, regulations and policies of environmental issues and EPA actions for communities with EJ concerns (2021-2022).

