

EPA Releases Environmental Justice Strategic Plan for 2016-2020

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On October 27, 2016, EPA released its [Environmental Justice 2020 Action Agenda](#) (EJ 2020). EPA defines environmental justice 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 2020 is EPA’s strategic plan for advancing environmental justice for the years 2016-2020.

In EJ 2020, EPA prioritizes three goals:

1. Deepening environmental justice practice within EPA programs to improve the health and environment of overburdened communities.
2. Working with partners to expand EPA’s positive impact within overburdened communities.
3. Demonstrating progress on significant environmental justice challenges.

Although mentioned explicitly only once, the [Flint, Michigan water crisis](#) appears to be a significant influence on the document. EJ 2020’s Goal three focuses on four areas, two of which relate to the Flint, Michigan water crisis: disparities in childhood blood lead levels, and public drinking water quality.

EPA has recently faced increased scrutiny regarding its responsiveness and efficacy in resolving environmental justice concerns in vulnerable communities. In September 2016, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued a [report](#) “Examining [EPA’s] Enforcement of Title VI and Executive Order 12,898,” which found, in part, that “EPA has a history of being unable to meet its regulatory deadlines and experiences extreme delays in responding to Title VI complaints in the area of environmental justice.” However, in EJ 2020, Administrator Gina McCarthy emphasizes that EPA is “work[ing] to ensure that every person in every community enjoys the benefits of living in a cleaner, healthier nation.”

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