

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Location: Virtual

Date: 2/25/21

Time: 10am-12pm

Minutes

In Attendance - Commission Members: Camille Burke, Chair, Secretary Grumbles, MDE, Crystal Faison, Paulette Hammond, Paula Dannenfeldt, Bob Hackman, CJ for Senator Patterson, Barbara Paca, Subha Chandar, MDH, Malachy Rice, Commerce, John Papagini, DHCD

Members of the Public & State Agency Staff: Matthew Lee, EPA, Jan Michael Archer, Dr. Sacoby Wilson, Phillip Wilson, Abdularahman Monamme, Veronika Carella, Pam Kasemeyer, Theodore Mills, Janet Carnick, Arielle King, Kamita Grey, Ramon Palencia-Calvo, Suzanne Dorsey, Horacio Tablada, Denise Keehner, Devon Dodson, Lisa Nissley, Kimberlee Drake, Erick Thunell, Cindy Osorto, Stephanie Cobb Williams, Lisa Jones

- **Introduction by Camille Burke, Chair**


The Chair began the meeting with a recap of the bill hearing for SB 674: CEJSC Reform, which reorganizes the Commission and its duties. She mentioned that while there are complaints about the work of the Commission, she believes these are opportunities. She noted the Commission is all working hard and as we increase our membership, we will have the capacity to get more and more done. There are several vacancies on the Commission. Please share any ideas for membership with Devon Dodson or encourage people to apply for membership. She asked members to share a bio and picture with staff for future use and reminded them that financial disclosures are due to the Ethics Commission by April 30, 2020.

- **Remarks by Secretary Grumbles**

Secretary Grumbles welcomed the Commission and thanked the Chair for her comments. The Secretary commented on the good news that the US is rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement. He shared that the Governor released the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act Plan ([GGRA](#))

- **Screening Tools Presentations – EPA EJSCREEN and UMD EJSCREEN**

Matthew Lee presented on EPA EJ Screen. Mr. Lee is an Environmental Protection Specialist at the Office of Communities, Tribes and Environmental Assessment for U.S. EPA Region III, He works on EJ Screen, an environmental justice mapping and screening tool that provides EPA with a nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and demographic indicators. Often, he is asked to run reports for colleagues looking for data on



projects they are working on. The presentation can be found at: [here](#). Questions can be directed to Mr. Lee at lee.matthew@epa.gov.

It is notable that there is no definition of an EJ community for the purpose of EJ Screen. The data in EJ Screen is updated annually and uses 11 environmental indicators, 6 demographic indicators, and 11 EJ indexes. Data reflects census blocks and the maps can be downloaded.


Subha Chandar asked what happens when minority population is the majority of the population in a particular area. Matthew Lee explained that is accounted for and those areas would have a higher score as they have a higher minority population.

Kamita Gray of the BTB Coalition asked if he could compare the three major mapping tools, CAL Screen, Atlas, and this. CAL Screen is most similar, but has more cumulative impact. She also asked if there are pre-recorded instructions. There are many on the homepage (accessed by a Google search). Look for the Learn to Use EJ Screen a link and you will find instructions about understanding results, technical resources, and additional resources which is 8-10 videos itself.

Erica Hart asked if you can overlap data, for example lead and superfund areas. Yes, you can. When was EJ Screen launched? 2013. How do you collect data on the users and their experience? User data is collected via a survey maintained by headquarters. EJ Screen can be found here: <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>.

Dr. Sacoby Wilson and Jan-Michael Archer presented on MD EJ Screen, a GIS program that allows users to explore layers of environmental justice concern, determine the overall 'EJ Score' for census tracts in the state, and view additional context layers relevant to their area of concern. This program, found at <https://www.ceejhlab.org/>, is designed by the University of Maryland and CEEJH (Community Engagement, Environmental Justice, and Health) Laboratory. The presentation can be found at: [here](#). MD EJScreen can be found at <https://p1.cgis.umd.edu/mdejscreen/>.

Dr. Wilson discussed the state level need. This allows very state specific data to be included. For example, Maryland would be concerned about CAFOs while California would have more concerns about pesticide. Maryland and California both have these tools. North Carolina, New



Jersey, and Minnesota also have state versions of EJ Screen. The scoring tool is borrowed from Cal Enviro. Someone asked if this tool agrees with EJ Screen and if you can compare.

Only in that you can design two maps and look at them side by side. It was suggested that the Commission will ultimately need to pick one of the tools to use. Secretary Grumbles complimented the tool and said we need to use data to get us where we want to go with EJ and Climate.

Questions can be directed to Dr. Wilson at swilson2@umd.edu and Jan-Michel Archer at jarcher3@terpmail.umd.edu.

- **Status of EJ Related Legislation before the General Assembly**


Climate Solutions Now Act – Includes new duties for the CEJSC. The bill is moving through the Senate. MDE would need more staff to help implement.

SB 647/HB 1207 CEJSC Reform Bill – this came out of the summer workgroup Report of the Senate President's Advisory Workgroup on Equity and Inclusion Public Comment. The Commission drafted a letter sharing information about what we currently do. The sponsor was a little harsh toward the Commission. Dr. Wilson and Monica Brooks testified in support.

HB 1310 – this is a reintroduction (not exact, but same topic) of the bill Commission members met with Delegate Rosenberg on last year. Largely asks the Commission to prioritize Federal funds to EJ areas. No hearing yet.

- **Public Comment**

Kamita Gray, BTB – I am impressed with the tools. It is important to have local data to address on the ground community issues. There is often a divide between communities and academics. We need more communities at the table and we really need to figure out how to do that before decisions are made. Devon Dodson shared that is exactly what MDE wants to do and MDE wants to hear directly from the community. Camille Burke added that we will be reaching out because we need help to figure out what works best and how to be most respectful of communities.



Veronika Carella – Thanked the presenters and said we should get state databases included for consistency. She also mentioned we need to purposely include “sustainable communities” in this discussion (per the Commission’s name). Groundwater data should be included as well.

She spoke on Senator Patterson’s bill on a constitutional amendment to declare every person has an inalienable right to a healthful environment (SB151).

Other notes of interest (from chat box):

NWF is hosting two webinars on March 15th and March 22nd on geospatial tools; 1st session on state tools (California, Michigan, Maryland, and Washington) and 2nd session on County and City tools (Houston, Twin Cities, Cuyahoga tentative)

NAS is hosting a workshop on geospatial and remote sensing technologies with a focus on environmental justice and disasters on April 14th and 15th

NIEHS is hosting a webinar on geospatial tools for environmental justice in May 2021, contact Liam O’Fallon

<https://p1.cgis.umd.edu/mdejscreen/> Re: Dr. Wilson's earlier post regarding National Wildlife Federation (NWF)'s involvement in mapping tools -- <https://www.nwf.org/-/media/Documents/PDFs/Environmental-Threats/Environmental-Justice-Mapping-Tools.ashx?la=en&hash=347578719433ACCF5C50F1FE56C98AFFD17981>

The Environmental Law Institute will be having a webinar on environmental justice on accountability methods - <https://www.eli.org/events/keeping-our-word-accountability-racial-justice-environmental-sector>. The EPA Office of EJ also has some upcoming webinars: <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/epa-office-of-environmental-justice-20197837045>

MDE staff will share a Doodle Poll to choose a regular standing meeting time for the CEJSC. Please note, ultimately the fourth Tuesday of the month from 10-12p. The next meeting of the CEJSC will be on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, 10:00am to 12:00pm.