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CEJSC Meeting

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Attachments  [CEJSC Meeting](#)

Meeting records  [Recording](#)

Summary

Nevan Edwards -MDE- provided an update on the approval process of their bylaws and introduced Governor Moore's executive order on environmental justice, which mandates actions for state departments and emphasizes collaboration with underrepresented communities. Nevan Edwards -MDE-, Noble Smith -MDE-, and Alex Lima -MDE- presented a detailed overview of the redeveloped MD EnviroScreen tool, highlighting its features, updates, and navigation, as well as the new climate vulnerability score. The participants, including Joseph Griffiths -MDP-, Subha Chandar -MDH-, Dr. Sacoby Wilson, Aneca Atkinson -MDE-, C Burke, Andrew Miller, Regina T Boyce, and Rebecca Rehr, discussed the executive order's timeline,

commission seat availability, interagency communications, inclusion of the Maryland Environmental Service, tool development, climate vulnerability data, and access to data. Noble Smith -MDE- presented initial recommendations for the annual report, and the participants provided additional recommendations focusing on commission representation, tool utilization, legislation, and defining cumulative impacts, and the participants also discussed strategic planning, emerging issues, and the use of federal data sets.

Details

- **Bylaws and Attendance Policy** Nevan Edwards -MDE- provided an update on the approval process of their bylaws by the AG team. They are awaiting feedback, after which they plan to implement a new attendance policy and keep the commission informed. Noble Smith -MDE- added that attendees can put their names in the chat for attendance purposes.
- **Executive Order Overview** Nevan Edwards -MDE- initiated a presentation on the executive order recently signed by Governor Moore, aiming to advance environmental justice for communities affected by pollution. The order mandates actions for state departments and emphasizes collaboration with underrepresented communities and new agencies like the Interagency Council. The executive order has four main mandates, including engaging communities for feedback, submitting progress reports on environmental justice strategies, and increasing opportunities for historically underrepresented populations, particularly rural farmers, by addressing issues like land access and financing.
- **Environmental Justice Officer and Interagency Council** Nevan Edwards -MDE- stated that the executive order mandates each agency to designate an environmental justice officer responsible for developing and promoting environmental justice strategic plans. The order also established the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council to coordinate efforts across departments and levels of government. This council is tasked with identifying and leveraging state and federal resources to develop outreach, adaptation, and mitigation strategies, and will serve as a hub for building resources and improving environmental health outcomes.

- **Data-Driven Solutions and MD EnviroScreen** Nevan Edwards -MDE- highlighted the executive order's emphasis on data-driven solutions, mentioning tools like the Maryland EnviroScreen. This tool is designed to help review internal programs, target underrepresented communities, and refine public outreach strategies. The MD EnviroScreen also facilitates the creation of data-driven strategies with community members, ensuring that relevant indicators are used to address issues faced by Maryland communities and foster innovative solutions. Noble Smith -MDE- and Alex Lima -MDE- presented a detailed overview of the MD EnviroScreen, noting its redevelopment in response to the EPA EJ screen tool being down. The tool is required by the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 and House Bill 1200, which mandate its use for designating underserved communities and for certain permitting applications.
- **MD EnviroScreen Features and Updates** Alex Lima -MDE- outlined the changes from version two to version three of the MD EnviroScreen, including integrating EPA EJ analysis, adding lead indicators with federal definitions, modifying proximity analysis, and incorporating state-specific health data from MDH. The tool also uses recent census data for updated snapshots and includes a climate vulnerability score, which is required by the Climate Solutions Now Act for identifying communities disproportionately affected by climate impacts. The EJ score, which is a key component, assesses pollution burden, environmental effects, and sensitive populations, and is meant to be viewed beyond just the score itself to understand underlying indicators.
- **Navigating the MD EnviroScreen** Alex Lima -MDE- described the user interface of the MD EnviroScreen, including zoom features, a search bar for addresses or coordinates, and options to add data layers. The tool's legend provides definitions, a hyperlink to the methodology, and color coordinations for EJ scores and overburdened/underserved maps. Noble Smith -MDE- demonstrated how to access indicator maps, download EJ reports for permit applications, and filter map results to identify communities based on EJ scores or overburden factors. The tool also allows for integrating data from other sources like DNR-owned properties or DHCD's "just communities" layers to enable comprehensive analysis for initiatives such as tree planting.
- **Climate Vulnerability Score** Noble Smith -MDE- explained the new climate vulnerability score layer, which focuses on climate impacts in Maryland and is based on the Climate Solutions Now Act. This score incorporates underserved and overburdened communities, areas vulnerable to climate impacts, and

principles of equity and geographic impact. The climate vulnerability score is graded on a high to baseline range and will be used for tracking greenhouse gas spending reductions as part of the state's net-zero by 2040 initiative. It is calculated using community impacts (tree canopy coverage, EJ score) and climate exposure impacts (urban heat island, drought, storm surge, flooding).

- **Commission and Interagency Council Collaboration** Nevan Edwards -MDE- detailed the collaborative relationship between the commission and the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council, including mandated public meetings to further public engagement in environmental justice strategy. They presented a chart outlining the similar goals but distinct roles of the commission and the council, with the commission focusing on policy recommendations and data-driven solutions, and the council integrating strategies across different departments and ensuring consistency in environmental reports.
- **Timeline and Strategic Plans** Joseph Griffiths -MDP- inquired about the timeline for the executive order's implementation, and Nevan Edwards -MDE- clarified that guidance would be issued within six months of the order's signing. Subha Chandar -MDH- asked about the strategic plan due from each agency within 12 months, and Nevan Edwards -MDE- confirmed that guidance for this would come from the Interagency Council once it is fully established and meeting. Dr. Sacoby Wilson suggested a set timeline for agencies to complete their strategic plans, allowing the commission time to review and provide feedback in a dedicated meeting. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- agreed with this approach, aiming for an efficient and consistent process modeled after federal practices to avoid agencies coming to the commission at different times for engagement.
- **Commission Seat Availability** Dr. Sacoby Wilson raised a question about whether the executive order would lead to a shifting of seat availability on the commission to allow for more frontline community members. C Burke responded that the commission is mandated by statute, requiring statutory changes to alter its makeup, but acknowledged the overlap and stated it was a conversation worth having. Nevan Edwards -MDE- and Aneca Atkinson -MDE- explained that while the statute for community member seats says "at least," implying no maximum, the appointing parties (Governor's office, Speaker of the House, Chair of the Senate) dictate who holds the seats. They expressed that diversifying the commission with more community members is something they are noting and exploring how to take advantage of within the statute's flexibility.

- **Agency Communications and Participation** Subha Chandar -MDH- asked about the status of communications with state agencies regarding the executive order's implementation. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- responded that notifications would be sent from the Secretary to agency secretaries, aiming for this week or next, to initiate the process of identifying participants for the council. She emphasized the importance of leadership within the agencies participating on the council, ensuring they have decision-making power or easy access to those who do, and committed to sending courtesy emails to commission agencies once communications are sent.
- **Inclusion of MEES** Dr. Sacoby Wilson inquired if the Maryland Environmental Service (MEES) would be included as one of the agencies in the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council due to their infrastructure work. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- stated that while MEES is not explicitly called out in the executive order, a "catchall" provision exists to bring in other departments as needed for short stints.
- **Tool Development and Data Proximity** Sacoby Wilson inquired about the basis for the 2-mile/5km radius in the tool and the rationale behind the three-domain approach. Noble Smith -MDE- confirmed that the proximity measures, as well as the use of proximity rather than facility points, are codified in law. They also emphasized that the tool is not stagnant and will incorporate new and better data sources, while the initial version established the legal baseline of required information.
- **Climate Vulnerability and Health Data** Sacoby Wilson suggested reviewing the CDC CVI tool and California's climate mapping tool for climate vulnerability indicators, noting that extreme temperatures (both hot and cold) and co-pollutants should be considered in addition to greenhouse gases. Noble Smith -MDE- agreed on the future inclusion of health data in the climate vulnerability score, acknowledging its importance for indicating vulnerability. Sacoby Wilson reiterated the utility of the California map and the CVI as robust tools for future versions of the Maryland tool.
- **Access to Data and Collaborative Work** Andrew Miller inquired about exporting map layers for offline use, to which Noble Smith -MDE- confirmed that efforts are underway to allow map downloads and data set exports. Sacoby Wilson elaborated on ongoing collaborative work with MDE, funded by NIH, to develop their own mapping tool (version 4.0), conduct expanded literature reviews, perform integrated analysis of federal and state tools, and conduct

cross-comparisons, with materials to be shared by the end of September. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- announced that geo data layers are already available on IMAP.

- **Annual Report Recommendations: Commission Representation** Noble Smith -MDE- presented initial recommendations for the annual report, including reserving community seats for a Spanish-speaking community member and a youth or youth-facing organization to improve representation on the commission. Regina T Boyce suggested broadening the language to include individuals from other immigrant communities beyond just Spanish-speaking, a suggestion that Noble Smith -MDE- found to be a great idea. Rebecca Rehr proposed prioritizing more inclusive community representation rather than reserving specific allocations, allowing for expansion.
- **Annual Report Recommendations: Tool Utilization and Legislation** Joseph Griffiths -MDP- recommended regular use of the EnviroScreen tool in commission meetings and sharing case studies of its use by various government agencies or organizations. Sacoby Wilson added that the tool should be integrated into each agency's strategic plan for operationalizing the executive order. Rebecca Rehr highlighted unfulfilled recommendations from the previous annual report, specifically formalizing a 40% state fund allocation to communities disproportionately affected by climate impacts and legislating cumulative impacts analysis in MDE's permitting.
- **Defining Cumulative Impacts** Regina T Boyce emphasized the importance of the commission defining what cumulative impacts mean specifically for the state of Maryland, rather than just recommending its discussion. Aneca Atkinson -MDE- noted that MDE has already conducted literature reviews on different EJ laws and policies across the country, including those related to cumulative impacts, and could present this information to the commission. Sacoby Wilson affirmed their extensive work and expertise on cumulative impacts, including participation in federal working groups and journal publications, and expressed willingness to help synthesize the existing knowledge.
- **Strategic Planning and Emerging Issues** Sacoby Wilson advised consulting the governor's transition plan for environmental justice, as it contains substantial information informed by the commission and EJ advocates. He also suggested integrating strategic planning comments into recommendations and addressing emerging issues like data centers. Additionally, Sacoby Wilson stressed the importance of tracking funding related to CVI and NWAC to assess return on investment and co-benefits, and highlighted the significance of building "just

communities" through investments and development, rather than solely focusing on blocking projects.

- **Federal Data Sets** Subha Chandar -MDH- suggested a joint meeting with CPAC to discuss cumulative impacts. She also recommended including in the annual report a call for maintaining the accuracy and public availability of federal data sets, especially those used by EnviroScreen, due to concerns about their potential removal or modification.

Suggested next steps

- Rebecca Rehr will propose including recommendations in the annual report for the state to (1) pass a law requiring cumulative impacts analysis in permitting, and (2) continue investing in environmental justice and sustainable communities work.
- The group will work on defining cumulative impacts for the state of Maryland as a project.
- Aneca Atkinson -MDE- will present the literature reviews and evaluation of EJ laws and policies across the country to the commission for discussion.
- The group will look at the governor's transition plan, especially the environmental justice section, for recommendations for the annual report and integrate the strategic plan comment into these recommendations.
- Nevan Edwards -MDE- will make the further implementation or guidance through the enviro screen a part of the annual report.
- Subha Chandar -MDH- will make a recommendation about maintaining federal data sets, their accuracy, and public availability.

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