

Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council



Report to the Governor
December 2025

Member Agencies

Department of Natural Resources

Department of Transportation

Maryland Port Administration

Department of Agriculture

Department of Housing and Community Development
Department of Health

Department of Planning

Maryland Energy Administration

Department of Commerce

Department of Emergency Management

Governor's Office for Children

Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

Department of Budget and Management

Other officials of State Agencies as the Governor or Secretary of the Environment may from time to time designate.

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Abbreviations

ACP	Affordable Connectivity Program
CAC	Critical Areas Commission
CEJSC	Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities
EJ	Environmental Justice
DNR	Maryland Department of Natural Resources
IEJEAC	Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council
MDE	Maryland Department of the Environment
MDA	Maryland Department of Agriculture
MEA	Maryland Energy Administration
MPA	Maryland Port Administration
MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation
MDP	Maryland Department of Planning
VOICE EO	Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity Executive Order

Letter From Chair and Vice Chair

On behalf of the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council (the Council), it is an honor and a privilege to submit the 2025 Council Annual Report to Governor Wes Moore.

As Chair and Vice Chair, we assume these roles knowing that the Environmental Justice Executive Order (EO) that established this Council fulfilled a vision that many have dreamed of for generations. And we embrace the Governor's decree that "environmental justice is not a lane, it's a lens," expecting every member and collaborating agency to incorporate an EJ perspective into their daily work.

The Council is committed to the whole-government approach of addressing environmental justice with the singular purpose of building staff capacity and advancing EJ efforts. Our core tenets affirm that access to clean air, water, and land is a **right** to which every Maryland resident is entitled. Our next steps will be intentional and strategic, while prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness. The strategy will include minimizing duplication of services by reviewing existing strategic plans to build on foundational work. We will utilize data in our efforts to address the needs of underrepresented, overburdened and marginalized communities. Ultimately, we will accomplish this as a unified body because "together we are stronger."



Adam Ortiz
Deputy Director, MDE
Chair



Aneca Atkinson
Assistant Secretary, MDE
Vice Chair

Background

On July 17th, 2025, Governor Wes Moore signed the V.O.I.C.E. executive order to advance Environmental Justice in the State of Maryland. The order establishes several core requirements for all state agencies, thereby reinforcing the interconnected nature of environmental justice across various sectors, from health to agriculture.¹

Addressing environmental justice is a comprehensive challenge that requires a coordinated, holistic effort across all branches of state government. The purpose of the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council is to support and facilitate interagency collaboration on programs and activities related to environmental justice. Delivering on the Moore-Miller Administration's commitment of ensuring that "every Marylander has access to clean air, clean water, and resilient communities."

2025 MEETINGS OF THE INTERAGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

To initiate this interagency approach, the Council held two meetings in 2025. The kick-off meeting of the Council was held in-person at the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) on September 30th. During the meeting, state agencies discussed how to advance environmental justice and increase the meaningful participation of communities experiencing environmental justice concerns through the development of guidance, the designation of an environmental justice officer for each state agency, and the creation of a publicly available biennial environmental justice strategic plan with metrics that promote environmental justice across all state agencies.

The second meeting of the Council was held on November 19th, with a primary focus on delivering Strategic Plan guidance. This guidance emphasizes flexibility, allowing agencies to produce plans ranging from 5 to 30 pages based on their mission and community engagement needs. The use of plain language, logic models, and other accessible tools is encouraged in agency strategic plans to make content widely understandable, and agencies are invited to build on existing strategic materials to strengthen environmental justice initiatives. Key requirements include agency outreach such as clear documentation of how community input shapes the plan, including specific steps taken to ensure meaningful participation from individuals and communities with environmental justice concerns.

¹ Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity (VOICE)
[https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/89/EO%2001.01.2025.17%20Valuing%20Opportunity,%20Inclusion,%20and%20Community%20Equity%20\(VOICE\)_Accessible.pdf](https://governor.maryland.gov/Lists/ExecutiveOrders/Attachments/89/EO%2001.01.2025.17%20Valuing%20Opportunity,%20Inclusion,%20and%20Community%20Equity%20(VOICE)_Accessible.pdf)

STANDARDIZING AND SHARING DATA ACROSS AGENCIES

State agencies are mandated by the executive order to use the MDEnviroScreen mapping tool for the purpose of engaging communities affected by environmental issues and creating customized strategies to resolve environmental justice concerns. The tool combines data on pollution levels with population vulnerability to generate a score that aids policymakers in assessing potential environmental burdens, engaging impacted communities, and microtargeting areas for focused resource allocation and tailored solutions.

MDEnviroScreen Version 3.0² launched in June 2025 and is already being utilized by many state agencies to identify areas and communities in need. MDE conducted 11 webinars, five of which were specifically designed to educate state employees on the tools' functions and capabilities. Agencies across the state of Maryland are utilizing the tool to access and share key data across Maryland. The Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) is adding a layer to the tool to identify census tracts that qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) is leveraging MDEnviroScreen data for this year's Attainment Report³. Additionally, the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) is exploring adding the EJ Score map layer to a complimentary online tool that displays metrics for the Sustainable Growth Planning Principles and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has discussed using the tool to identify the overlap between MDE's permitting and the Critical Areas Commission (CAC) permitting, using the data to better understand community concerns.

ADDITIONAL COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council has expanded collaboration with state agencies on the development of grants and related programming. In collaboration with MDE, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has committed to providing technical assistance as part of a grant proposal to facilitate connections to local area farmers, technical assistance providers, and learning opportunities through the department's Urban and Small Farms and Healthy Soils Programs.

Beyond collaborating with other state agencies, the Council is also working closely with community members and other stakeholders, primarily through the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC), which consists of gubernatorial and legislative appointees representing communities affected by EJ issues, business, environmental and academic organizations, and health experts. Through this collaboration, the Council and the

² MDEnviroScreen 3.0 <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/e4148f01acf743bf8ac1d2aa2dc0947f>

³ Maryland Department of Transportation Attainment Report <https://www.mdot.maryland.gov/tso/pages/Index.aspx?PageId=121>

Commission will examine Environmental Justice issues and sustainable community opportunities that may be associated with public health, safety, economy, government, or any other manner associated with EJ and sustainable communities in Maryland. MDE will continue to facilitate departmental collaborations between state agencies and community partners.

2026 Guidance

PURPOSE OF SECTION

This section outlines the guidance given to agencies across the state of Maryland for increasing community outreach and developing environmental justice initiatives in collaboration with state agencies and impacted communities across Maryland. In the future, this section may outline updates to interagency initiatives that inform Marylanders about key interagency environmental initiatives.

STRATEGIC PLAN

- “...each agency member of the Council shall submit to the Chair and make available to the public, online, an Environmental Justice Strategic Plan with metrics to promote Environmental Justice in ways tailored to the specific agency and its authority, mission, and programs. Agencies must seek guidance from impacted stakeholders in the development of the metrics.”

Each agency member of the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council must develop a Strategic Plan that is tailored to impacted stakeholders via community outreach. On November 12th, 2025, agencies received guidance from the Vice Chair of the Council in coordination with the Maryland Department of Environment’s Office on Environmental Justice on the drafting of the Strategic Plan. Agency strategic planning under the order will play a key role in fulfilling VOICE’s mandate of revitalizing the commitment of all Maryland state agencies to advance environmental justice. Strategic planning seeks to catalyze a new era of transparency, consistency, and accountability for environmental justice. Environmental Justice Strategic Plans are due to be submitted to the Chair of the Interagency Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council and made available to the public online no later than 12 months after the order.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE OFFICER

- “The Council shall [...] within each member agency of the Council, designate and Environmental Justice Officer responsible for leading agency planning and implementation of the agency’s Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, in a matter that seeks to reflect the rich diversity of Maryland”

The primary role of the Environmental Justice Officer is to lead the creation and implementation of the agency’s Environmental Justice Strategic Plan. This includes targeted engagement of stakeholders and community members across Maryland throughout the development and implementation of the strategic plan. The Environmental Justice Officer should also coordinate/collaborate with other state agencies throughout this process to ensure that work is consistent and streamlined. This is particularly important to avoid overwhelming community members with outreach from different agencies. The Environmental Justice Officer should assist with the creation of programs that help Marylanders to overcome social, geographic, cultural, physical, and economic barriers to environmental health, access, and enjoyment. The Environmental Justice Officer may be the same individual who serves on the Council or a different person, based on the agency's preference.

DATA-DRIVEN COLLABORATION AND PLANNING

- “The Council shall [...] Engage, collaborate, and consult with policy and community experts on Environmental Justice to conduct analyses and develop tools, including by building on and collaborating with existing bodies, as appropriate such as the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities (CEJSC), the Children's Environmental Health and Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC), the Maryland Commission on Climate Change, the Governor's 5 Subcabinet on Climate, the Sustainable Growth Subcabinet and the Chesapeake Bay Cabinet.”

State agencies benefit from having access to expertise, data tools, methodologies, and practices as they review programs and policies to achieve more equitable outcomes. Agencies should leverage the data developed by their sister agencies, to identify communities disproportionately affected by historical inequities and environmental hazards. Furthermore, agencies should utilize data-driven goals and indicators to measure opportunities and outcomes, ensure public accountability, and commit to transparently collecting demographic data on program participation to assess effectiveness, identify gaps, and ensure equitable access and representation across all state-supported sectors.

REDUCING BARRIERS FOR UNDERREPRESENTED FARMERS

- “State Agencies shall identify and implement mechanisms to increase resources and opportunities for historically underrepresented farmers, rural and urban, by reducing barriers for entry, such as land access, and financing.”

Ensuring that existing and new agricultural support programs such as grants, loans, and technical training are intentionally designed to be accessible and culturally competent for diverse farming communities is just one of many strategies that agencies can take to reduce barriers for underrepresented farmers. This requires actively reviewing and reforming policy to mitigate uncertainty, while eliminating biases against tenants and creating accessible programs. Agencies

should also implement strategies to counteract commercial pressures, such as downward price points and labor shortages, and bolster farm viability through support for financial stability and planning. Initiatives must prioritize engagement and decision-making that empowers farmers. Successful implementation will necessitate targeted outreach and the establishment of dedicated roles to build trust and facilitate engagement with farmers from marginalized backgrounds. It is critical to reach rural and urban producers who have traditionally lacked equitable access to land, capital, water resources, technical assistance, and market opportunities.