Frequently Asked Questions – MDEnviroScreen (Version 3)

What is the CSNA?
This acronym stands for the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, Maryland's signature climate law that defines "overburdened" and "underserved" and requires the Maryland Department of the Environment to create a methodology for identifying communities disproportionately affected by climate impacts. Our agency is meeting this requirement with the Climate Vulnerability Score, a new addition to Version 3 of the screening tool.

What is the tool called now, and why did the name change?
The screening tool has been rebranded to MDEnviroScreen to reflect the broader set of resources now available in Version 3, including the EJ Score, Climate Vulnerability Score, Child Poverty Map, and Overburdened and Underserved Maps.

Can users search for a location using latitude and longitude instead of an address?
Yes, but users should note that GIS standard notation for coordinates is "longitude, latitude," so longitude must be entered first in the search bar to generate the correct results. For example, the address 1800 Washington Blvd, Baltimore, MD, 21230 has latitude 39.2762319 and longitude -76.6440684. To access the data on MDEnviroScreen, users can enter the address or type -76.6440684, 39.2762319 into the search bar.

When entering the "official" score for the site, which number are we expected to enter?
For the purposes of compliance with HB 1200, permit applicants must include the EJ Score in their applications for the census tract where a project is proposed. In every census tract report, the final EJ Score is the first number that appears in the Environmental Justice Summary table at the top of the report.

What does the EJ Score mean, and how is it calculated?
The EJ Score aggregates pollution burden exposure, pollution environmental effects, and sensitive population indicators at the census tract level to help identify Maryland communities with environmental justice concerns. The EJ Score does not include indicators of race/ethnicity, language proficiency, or age and is completely separate from the Underserved and Overburdened Maps, which are for reference only.

The EJ Score is a percentile, so it is *relative* to all the other tracts in Maryland. Please note that raw percentages are often much lower than percentiles, and we urge MDE staff to make sure external users know they are looking at percentiles. Most importantly, the EJ Score itself is just a number, and we encourage everyone to look deeper into the specific indicators in a given community to identify their unique

environmental justice concerns. A detailed description of EJ Score calculations can be found in our updated methodology.

What is included in downloadable reports?
Users can click on a location in MDEnviroScreen and get a detailed report for the census tract. The report includes percentiles for each individual indicator in the EJ Score. Any indicators with values in the 75th percentile or above are bolded and brown. If users click "Download the Report," the tool will generate a one-page PDF with the EJ Score, Overburdened and Underserved designation, and percentiles for each separate indicator within the EJ Score. The PDF report also includes disclaimer language and the date exported.

Can users download layers from MDEnviroScreen to analyze or add to other maps?
Yes, users can download the layers. First, click the green "Report By Location" button second from the left beneath the search bar. Click on a point or draw a line or polygon through the census tracts of interest. This will draw up the data on the right of the screen. Users can click the export icon and select the format to download: Export to PDF, Export to JSON, Export to CSV, Export to GeoJSON, or Export to Item (which would be saved to your ArcGIS Online (AGOL) account.

Will there be fact sheets available to help permittees generate their application scores? Yes, the EJ Team will supply factsheets and how-to videos on how to use the MDEnviroScreen tool, as well as external webinars throughout the summer for the general public and counterparts in other state agencies. Program staff do not have to create their own.

What is the difference between Overburdened / Underserved and the final EJ Score?
"Overburdened" and "underserved" are defined by the Climate Solutions Now Act. According to the law, a census tract is "overburdened" if at least 3 of 21 indicators required by statute are at or above the 75th percentile for the state. A census tract is "underserved" if it meets any one of three criteria: (1) 50% or more of the population are minority, (2) 25% or more of the population are low income, or (3) 15% or more of the population have limited English proficiency.

These legal designations are *separate* from the EJ Score, which aggregates all of the underlying indicators (excluding minority population and English language proficiency) and calculates a final percentile score. The EJ Score is meant to provide an overall evaluation for a census tract and help users identify communities with environmental justice concerns.

Why not include additional indicators in the EJ Score?
Indicators in Version 3 of the tool come straight from state law, but MDE has authority to use additional indicators in the EJ Score following a rulemaking process for HB 1200 (2022).

What are the data sources used for the various indicators in the EJ Score?
MDEnviroScreen draws on federal and state data to calculate the EJ Score percentiles. The EJ Score indicators rely on datasets from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Maryland Department of the Environment, and the Maryland Department of Health. The Climate Vulnerability Score additionally relies on data from the Chesapeake Bay Program, Trust for Public Land, National Drought Mitigation Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. A detailed list of data sources can be found in our updated methodology document.

Can I reach out with more questions?
Yes, you can contact the Environmental Justice team. Reach out directly to Alex Lima (alex.lima@maryland.gov), or use the ej.mde@maryland.gov email address.