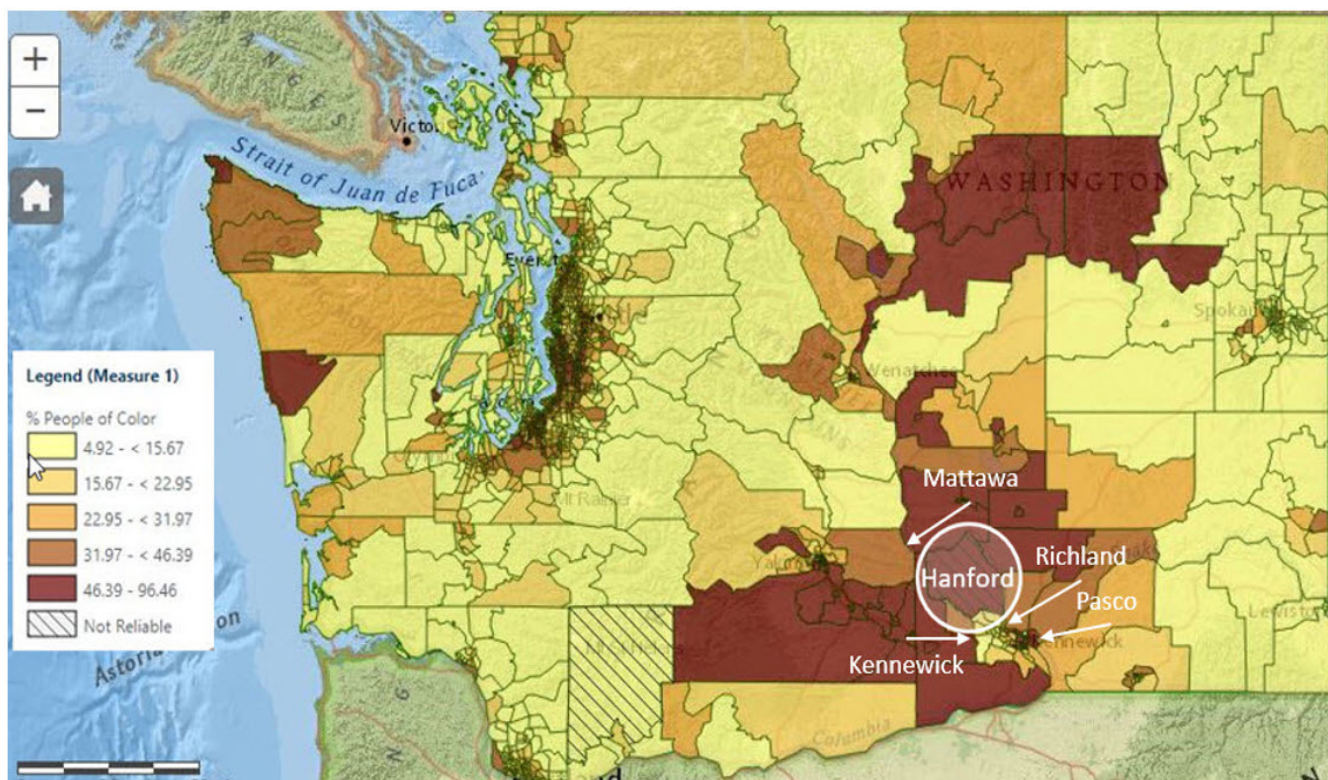


# Environmental Justice at Hanford

Missed cleanup milestones and consistent underfunding at the U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford Site in southeastern Washington exponentially increase overall costs, delay cleanup completion, and exposes surrounding populations to environmental and health risks. Those most vulnerable to harmful impacts are overburdened and underserved communities, including people of color, low-income populations, Tribes, and indigenous people.



## Communities at Risk

Hanford's plutonium production contaminated the area for 40 years before cleanup began in 1989. Consistent underfunding of the cleanup mission has caused legal deadlines to be missed, increased overall cleanup costs, and extended projected completion into the 2080s. Currently, there are two leaking underground tanks on site.

Each additional year of cleanup means improperly stored waste or accidental releases. This could further contaminate the soil, air, aquifers, and Columbia River impacting communities in the surrounding area and down river.

Cleanup delays mean prolonged threats to habitat and wildlife, and risks to the physical, cultural, and economic wellbeing of local Tribes and communities.

Map reflects the population diversity of the area around the Hanford Site. Source: EPA EJ screen People of Color by county, Census tract 2020

## Our Responsibility

We must ensure that the rights of sovereign nations are upheld through cleanup, and that we align with federal and state environmental justice obligations to address and eliminate environmental and health disparities around Hanford.

We need to demonstrate, through adequate funding and aggressive deadlines, our commitment to protect the Tribes, area residents, and communities who face the highest risks from Hanford contamination and persistent delays.

## Tribal Impacts

There are three Tribal Governments in the area that the state partners with on environmental issues attributed to nuclear waste. These indigenous populations have reserved rights per their 1855 Treaty of Yakama and the Treaty of Walla Walla: the Confederate Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Nez Perce Tribe.

The Wanapum Tribe is one of the Bands of the Yakama Nation. They once inhabited year-round villages where Hanford is now before being forced off their ancestral territory. The Wanapum have not received any compensation for their loss of lands and Treaty territory. All of these indigenous populations have expressed significant interest in the oversight and thorough cleanup of polluted areas that once provided hunting, gathering and cultural resources for multiple sovereign Tribes and Nations.

## Overburdened and Underserved Communities

The legacy of environmental contamination from Hanford and ongoing environmental and public health risks have regional effects on economic and community wellbeing. These effects disproportionately impact people already overburdened by environmental and health concerns. This population faces numerous barriers to accessing government information or services such as:

- Information about the Hanford Site.
- Information about potential health risks.
- Resources to protect themselves and their families.
- Resources for emergencies.

For example, one of the closest cities to Hanford is Mattawa in Grant County. Mattawa has about 4,600 people. Of that, 98% identify as Hispanic, 61% are low-income, 76% have less than a high school education, and 52% do not speak English well.

Governments have an obligation to ensure information about public health, laws, safety, and decisions that may affect the public are provided in appropriate languages and accessible formats.

	People of color	Low income	Non English speaking at home	Less than a high school education	
<b>Counties</b>	Adams	66	50	55	33
	Benton	30	28	21	10
	Franklin	60	38	49	25
	Grant	46	42	37	23
<b>Cities</b>	Kennewick	35	34	27	12
	<b>Mattawa</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>76</b>
	Pasco	63	38	52	25
	Richland	22	23	13	4
	Washington	31	26	20	9

Values in percentages

Cities and counties near Hanford, when compared to the state, have a higher percentage of people of color, individuals with less than high school education, low income residents, and people who have difficulty with English.

## Government Accountability

Federal and state agencies have nondiscrimination, equity and environmental justice obligations:

- Federal Executive Order 12898
- Executive Order 14008
- Washington State's Environmental Justice Law
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 509-372-7950 or email at [Hanford@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:Hanford@ecy.wa.gov), or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.