

Focus on: Environmental Justice in Washington



Figure 1. Tahoma or Mt. Rainier

What is Environmental Justice?

In Washington state and nationally, communities of color, Tribes, and areas with low-income households are more often burdened with environmental hazards, like water and air pollution and contaminated lands, than other communities. People in these communities also often have less access to environmental benefits, like green spaces and clean air. These environmental inequalities are linked to poorer health outcomes, like asthma and cancer risk.

Environmental justice is about taking action to address unfair environmental impacts, prioritize community health and wellbeing, and support a thriving environment for every community.

Washington's Environmental Justice Law

The Healthy Environment for All Act (also known as the HEAL Act) is the first Washington law to create a cooperative approach to environmental justice across multiple state government agencies. Passed by the Legislature in 2021, the law requires the state Departments of Ecology, Agriculture, Commerce, Health, Natural Resources, Transportation, as well as the Puget Sound Partnership, to work together to advance environmental justice.

Actions You Can Take

- Visit the [Department of Ecology HEAL Act webpage](#) to learn more.¹
- Share your views about Ecology's significant agency actions. [Sign up to receive emails from Ecology](#) about opportunities to engage.²
- Report an environmental issue through the [Statewide Environmental Reports Tracking System \(ERTS\)](#).³
- Follow the [Environmental Justice Council](#) and share your environmental justice concerns and ideas by providing public comment at a Council meeting.⁴

¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/environmental-justice/heal>

² https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAECY/subscriber/new?topic_id=WAECY_288

³ <https://ecology.wa.gov/footer-pages/report-an-environmental-issue/statewide-reporting-form-erts>

⁴ <https://waportal.org/partners/environmental-justice-council/environmental-justice-council-meetings>

Find Info about Your Neighborhood

There are many ways you can learn about environmental justice and public health issues in your community. Your local community organizations can be a great source of information. There are also several online tools:

Department of Ecology, Washington State

- [Ecology's "What's in my Neighborhood" tool](#) shows toxic cleanup sites across the state. You can enter an address and see cleanup sites that are near that location.⁵
- [Air Monitoring Network](#) shows current air quality conditions from air monitoring stations that measure air pollution in Washington.⁶
- [Dirt Alert map](#) shows the general pattern of arsenic contamination from the Asarco Tacoma Smelter. You can also view information about other areas of arsenic contamination statewide.⁷

Department of Health, Washington State

- [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#) combines information about 19 environmental and health factors, and it highlights inequalities across the state. You can search for your area by address or zip code.⁸

Environmental Protection Agency, national scope

- [EJScreen](#) combines environmental, health, and community information into maps and reports showing where people face high environmental burdens. You can search by address, location name, or zip code.⁹
- [How's my Waterway?](#) has information about local water bodies. You can search for your community.¹⁰

Connect with Ecology's Office of Equity and Environmental Justice!

Call (360) 480-6270 to reach the Environmental Justice Senior Policy Advisor or visit our [website](#).¹¹



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You have a right to translation, interpretation, language services, and ADA accommodation. Please contact Ecology at 360-407-6831 or ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.

⁵ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/neighborhood/?lat=47.500000&lon=-121.000000&zoom=7&radius=false>

⁶ <https://enviwa.ecology.wa.gov/home/map>

⁷ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/dirtalert/?lat=47.273840&lon=-122.500000&zoom=11>

⁸ <https://doh.wa.gov/data-and-statistical-reports/washington-tracking-network-wtn/washington-environmental-health-disparities-map>

⁹ <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>

¹⁰ <https://www.epa.gov/waterdata/how-my-waterway>

¹¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Who-we-are/Environmental-Justice>