



**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT,
ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE, &
HEALTH**

Building a New Environmental and Climate Justice Screening and Mapping Tool

Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping (EJSM) tools can be powerful allies in the fight for justice. These tools allow users to visualize and explore patterns of environmental and climate hazards, revealing what kinds of communities are at risk from these hazards, and the compounded pollution and climate burdens certain communities face.

A comprehensive EJSM tool is one that not only includes environmental and demographic indicators, but also measures factors such as economic progress, health, and resiliency—it is only with these kinds of indicators that we have a holistic, accurate understanding of environmental justice, and climate equity and justice.

In line with the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council's Justice 40 recommendations regarding a Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool and revised Executive Order 12898, we propose a

comprehensive set of indicators that may be used to identify communities particularly confronted with climate injustices to aid in fair and equitable policy and decision making. Indicators fall into the following categories:

1. Economic Progress: individual capacity to mitigate or adapt to environmental risks through financial or material resources as well as opportunities to build healthy, resilient communities; these indicators can also illustrate inequities in wage, wealth, and spending. Potential indicators include: percent of income spent on food; number of businesses owned by people of color, and the number of jobs in the clean energy sector.

2. Social Progress: the ability of individuals to care for themselves within the context of their physical and social environments. New indicators could include: internet access, degree of segregation, size of unhoused population, and public transit access.

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3. Climate Equity and Justice: ensures that all people can achieve full and equal access to and the benefits of climate solutions, while not shouldering an unequal burden of climate impacts. Indicators of climate equity can include cost of insurance, government spending on infrastructure protection, and level of access to emergency services.

4. Vulnerability: susceptibility to environmental hazards; measured through indicators related to the built and natural environment and individual characteristics such as health and socioeconomic status. A suite of existing indices can be integrated to indicate vulnerability, such as the Social Vulnerability Index and the National Disaster Risk Index.

5. Health Disparities: health outcomes from climate-related hazards, such as severe burns from forest fires, drowning and mold exposure from flooding, and vector-borne disease rates.

6. Resilience: the ability of communities to prepare for and respond to climate-related events. Resilience indicators measure the level of resilience of a system, community, or individual for areas prone to natural disasters and climate events. This can include levels of social cohesion, number of elevated homes, the number of elevated homes, the number of or access to cooling centers, and more.

Recommendations for Application in Policy and Decision Making

Incorporating these types of indicators into a new, nationwide EJSM tool can further our understanding of environmental and climate justice and vulnerability. It can also promote more equity-focused, EJ-related climate legislation and policy—but only if such a tool is actually integrated into decision-making, and used to inform federal focus, investment, and enforcement.

To help achieve this, we recommend the following:

- 1. Microtarget areas in greatest need of intervention.**
- 2. Communicate and brainstorm indicators with community members to reflect lived expertise.**
- 3. Ensure adequate funding, maintenance, and oversight of the tool.**
- 4. Focus on equitable organizational and procurement capacity building.**
- 5. Screen for cumulative impacts.**
- 6. Develop a way to define target communities by ranking them based on region-specific vulnerabilities and risks.**
- 7. Codify the use of federal environmental justice mapping tools into legislation at all levels of governance, planning, and development.**
- 8. Train legislators, urban planners, and communities how to use the tool.**
- 9. Pursue further high-resolution datasets to fill spatial data gaps.**
- 10. Measure the success of adaptation strategies.**
- 11. Develop inclusive mitigation strategies.**
- 12. Measure and analyze equity.**
- 13. Deliver targeted and assured benefits to disadvantaged communities, by tracking investments and benefits.**
- 14. Utilize EJSM tools to inform federal funding distribution.**
- 15. Develop regional hot-spot crisis teams to adequately respond to environmental health hazards, specifically as they relate to vulnerable communities.**

For additional details on the above recommendations, please see our accompanying paper, *Gaps in Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tools and Potential New Indicators:* [nwf.org/EJSMtools](https://www.nwf.org/EJSMtools)