

## Factsheet: Vermont Environmental Justice Law

**What is the Vermont Environmental Justice Law?** Also known as Act 154 of 2022, the Vermont Environmental Justice Law is the state's first law specifically meant to address environmental health disparities and improve the health and well-being of all Vermont residents. The Environmental Justice Law establishes Vermont's Environmental Justice State Policy.

**What is the purpose of the Vermont Environmental Justice Law?** The purpose of the Environmental Justice Law is to ensure all Vermonters regardless of race, cultural background, or income have equitable access to environmental benefits such as clean air and water, healthy food, and public transportation. The Environmental Justice Law also protects communities from disproportionate environmental burdens such as polluted air and water, climate change impacts, and limited access to green spaces. The Environmental Justice Law requires State agencies to meaningfully engage Vermonters in the environmental decision-making processes.

**How will the Vermont Environmental Justice Law be implemented?** The Environmental Justice Law creates an Environmental Justice Advisory Council and an Interagency Environmental Justice Committee. The Advisory Council is composed of a range of community representatives, and they provide independent advice to State agencies and the General Assembly on matters related to environmental justice. The Interagency Committee is composed of representatives from ten State agencies, and they coordinate State agency implementation of the Environmental Justice Law. Over the coming years, the Advisory Council and Interagency Committee will work together to implement the Environmental Justice Law and ensure that State agencies embed environmental justice throughout the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

**What are some specific actions required by the Vermont Environmental Justice Law?** This law requires that the covered State agencies: (1) Create and adopt community engagement plans; (2) Develop a statewide environmental justice mapping tool and use the tool to ensure environmental burdens are fairly distributed; (3) Publish annual spending reports showing which communities had access to what environmental benefits; (4) Report on and address any civil rights or environmental justice complaints filed against the agency.

**How can the public participate in the Vermont Environmental Justice Law implementation process?** Visit the Vermont Environmental Justice webpages (<https://bit.ly/3qyr0gd>) or scan the QR code to learn more about engagement opportunities. You can translate the information on our website using the Google Translate button in the top right corner.



*The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) operates its programs, services, and activities without discriminating on the basis of race, religion, creed, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), ancestry, place of birth, disability, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or breastfeeding (mother and child).*

### **What is environmental justice?**

As defined in the Vermont Environmental Justice Law, environmental justice means that “all individuals are afforded equitable access to and distribution of environmental benefits; equitable distribution of environmental burdens; and fair and equitable treatment and meaningful participation in decision-making processes, including the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Environmental justice recognizes the particular needs of individuals of every race, color, income, class, ability status, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity or ancestry, religious belief, or English language proficiency level.”

### **What is the definition of environmental justice focus population?**

The Environmental Justice Law includes in its definition of environmental justice focus populations low-income Vermonters, Persons of Color, Indigenous Peoples, and Vermonters who primarily speak languages other than English.

### **What is a community engagement plan?**

A community engagement plan is a document describing how the covered agencies will provide meaningful participation to all individuals, with particular attention to environmental justice focus populations, during environmental decision-making.

### **What is an environmental justice mapping tool?**

An environmental justice mapping tool is a digital tool used to spatially analyze patterns of environmental inequities. The mapping tool is meant to inform decision-making processes by providing evidence-based insights into environmental inequities.

### **What are environmental benefits?**

Generally, environmental benefits are assets and services that contribute to communities' ability to thrive, such as clean air and water, public transportation, and healthcare.

### **What are environmental burdens?**

Generally, environmental burdens are environmental stressors that reduce communities' ability to thrive such as polluted air and water, negative climate change impacts, or limited access to green spaces.

**Which covered State agencies are required to implement this law?** Agency of Natural Resources; Agency of Transportation; Agency of Commerce and Community Development; Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets; Agency of Education; Public Utility Commission; Natural Resources Board; Department of Health; Department of Public Safety; Department of Public Service; and the Office of Racial Equity.

FREE LANGUAGE SERVICES | SERVICES LINGUISTIQUES GRATUITS | भाषासम्बन्धी निःशुल्क सेवाहरू | SERVICIOS GRATUITOS DE IDIOMAS | 免費語言服務 | BESPLATNE JEZIČKE USLUGE | БЕСПЛАТНЫЕ УСЛУГИ ПЕРЕВОДА | DỊCH VỤ NGÔN NGỮ MIỄN PHÍ | 無料通訳サービス | ነጻ የቋንቋ አገልግሎቶች | HUDUMA ZA MSAADA WA LUGHA BILA MALIPO | BESPLATNE JEZIČKE USLUGE | အခမဲ့ ဘာသာစကား ဝန်ဆောင်မှုများ | ADEEGYO LUUQADA AH OO BILAASH AH | خدمات لغة مجانية: [anr.civilrights@vermont.gov](mailto:anr.civilrights@vermont.gov) or 802-636-7827.