

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AGENCY GOALS

North Carolina
Department of Health and Human Service
2024

INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) defines environmental justice (EJ) as equal access to a healthy environment for all people. Environmental justice also requires meaningful involvement in decision making that affects the environment, health, and well-being of communities. In 2022, NCDHHS named its first Environmental Justice and Equity Lead in response to Governor Cooper's [Executive Order No. 246](#) and continues to support the environmental justice actions mandated by [Executive Order No. 292](#). Through partnership between the NCDHHS Division of Public Health, the NCDHHS Office of Health Equity, and others in NCDHHS, we have established the environmental justice goals below.

1. NCDHHS will increase interactions with local health departments and North Carolina residents impacted by environmental injustice to improve understanding and inform investigations of potential health impacts.

1.1 **Outcome:** Starting in 2025, the NCDHHS Environmental Justice Lead and NCDHHS staff in the Division of Public Health and the Health Equity Portfolio, in coordination with other programs as applicable, will facilitate NCDHHS Environmental Justice Town Hall meetings twice a year.

1.1.1 NCDHHS Environmental Justice Town Hall Meetings will be held in person, after 5pm, and in counties where more than 50% of the census tracts rank in the highest quartile of the CDC EJ Index to facilitate the participation of overburdened communities.

1.1.2 These meetings will be a bidirectional opportunity to share updates on NCDHHS environmental justice activities and hear health-related concerns from local health departments, tribal organizations, community organizations, and residents impacted by environmental injustice.

1.2 **Outcome:** By December 31, 2024, NCDHHS will publish an environmental justice webpage to highlight the health impacts of environmental justice concerns in North Carolina and NCDHHS activities to improve environmental justice. The NCDHHS EJ webpage will include topics such as information about how to join the NCDHHS EJ listserv and provide a mechanism for submitting environmental justice concerns to the NCDHHS Environmental Justice Lead for response within two weeks of submission.

1.3 **Outcome:** By December 31, 2024, NCDHHS will publish a new Fish Advisory webpage to compile all the information on NCDHHS fish advisories into one location.

2. NCDHHS will work with local health departments to increase the inclusion of environmental justice chapters in community health assessments.

- 2.1 **OUTCOME:** NCDHHS will work with local health departments and other partners to provide environmental justice education and community outreach to help increase the number of community health assessments with an environmental justice chapter from one in 2022 to at least eight by June 1, 2025. Outreach will be prioritized to counties where more than 50% of census tracts rank in the highest quartile of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) EJ Index.
 - 2.2 **OUTCOME:** NCDHHS will work with local health departments and other partners to develop guidance for inclusion of environmental justice in community health assessments by October 31, 2024.
3. **NCDHHS will help address private well contamination and septic system failures in at least one county where more than 50% of census tracts are in the highest quartile of the CDC Environmental Justice Index.**
 - 3.1 **OUTCOME:** NCDHHS will pilot a private well and septic system program with partners that includes providing private well testing and treatment, disseminating private well water and septic system education materials, and conducting train-the-trainer sessions on private well testing and treatment and septic system maintenance.
 - 3.1.1 This goal is responsive to consistent feedback from the NC Environmental Public Health Tracking Advisory Board and other partners that private well contamination and septic system failures are a priority EJ topic.
 - 3.1.2 The pilot will be partially funded through an EPA Environmental Justice Government-to-Government (EJG2G) cooperative agreement awarded to NCDHHS in July 2024.
 - 3.2 **OUTCOME:** NCDHHS will seek additional funding for septic system repairs for low-income households, with consideration for

counties where more than 50% of census tracts rank in the highest quartile of the CDC EJ Index.