EJ Mapping 1/1 Report

Oregon Environmental Justice Mapping Tool

Oregon Environmental Justice Mapping Tool Background

By Hoang-Van Nguyen

The Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 4077 – The Environmental Justice for All Act in 2022. This required the newly formed Oregon Environmental Justice Council (EJC) to develop an Oregon environmental justice mapping tool to identify environmental justice communities.

The EJC 1/1 Welcome Package identifies the upcoming ten sequential decision points required for the successful implementation of the Oregon environmental justice mapping tool.

WHAT'S NEW

EJC 1/1 OBSERVATIONS

The Environmental Justice Mapping Leadership Team shares overall observations from our meetings with individual EJC members.

FAQ THEMES

This section introduces the six themes that emerged from all EJC 1/1 meetings.

ASKS

This report will identify themes and questions shared by the eight EJC members who participated in the EJ Mapping 1/1 meetings hosted by the Environmental Justice Mapping Tool Leadership Team.

This section identifies specific asks that came from individual EJC members.

EJC 1/1 Observations

By Hoang-Van Nguyen, Janine Salwasser, Myrica McCune, Ethan Sharygin, Gilbert Moncho, & Eric Main

The EJ Mapping Tool Leadership Team consists of representatives from Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Health Authority, Department of Administrative Services, Oregon State University Institute of Natural Resources, and Portland State University Population Research Center. A subset of this team met with individual EJC members between 3/21/2024-3/27/2024.

Eight of the eleven current EJC members participated in the 1/1 meetings regarding the EJ Mapping Tool, and all the participants shared unique perspectives.

They also communicated shared values regarding engaging Oregon communities in listening sessions and making the tool useful for communities and state agencies.

They learned and understood how the index work relates to development of the EJ Mapping Tool and saw how their decisions may impact index development.

Council members also recognized that some decision points will require robust support from the EJ Mapping Leadership team and workgroups to better understand the impacts of their decisions and how the tool will impact communities.

The EJ Mapping Tool Leadership team appreciates EJC member's thoughtful engagement with these 1/1s and we look forward to resuming them prior to discussing Indicator Selection (Decision Point 7).

FAQ Themes

By Hoang-Van Nguyen

Environmental Justice Council members come from diverse professional backgrounds that influence their contributions to the Environmental Justice Council. Eight members participated in 1/1 meetings to learn foundational information to prepare them for decisions related to the Oregon Environmental Justice Mapping Tool.

The following themes represent the types of questions received:

1. Decision Making Process & Impacts
2. Indicator Selection
3. Index Development
4. Community Listening Sessions
5. Tool Development
6. Data Updates and Tool Enhancements

Comment: A concern was expressed with confusion between correlation versus causation index development.

Asks

By the Oregon Environmental Justice Council Members

The following list describes specific asks coming from the Environmental Justice Council as it relates to the Oregon Environmental Justice Mapping Tool:

1. Prioritize using raw data to create indicators and indexes when possible.
2. Ability to upload data files to view them with indexes.
3. Ability to download data in variety of formats.
4. Identify economic factors such as economic data and industry contributions to communities.
5. Prioritize index development based on correlation not causation.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following frequently asked questions are organized by their respective themes.

Decision Making Process & Impacts
- Q1: How will community listening sessions impact decision points?
  - A1: Decision points may be revisited based on feedback from community listening sessions.
- Q2: How will previous EJC decisions be reconsidered?
  - A2: The EJ Mapping Tool leadership team recommends relaying concerns to EJC leadership for further discussion. HB4077 allows for continuous development of the EJ Mapping Tool in future phases.
- Q3: What type of flexibility is there to revisit decision points after the listening sessions.
  - A3: There will be an opportunity to revisit decision points after Decision Point 7 (Indicator Selection) to recalibrate previous decisions.
- Q4: How to the Liaison, Methodology, and Inventory workgroups overlap?
  - A4: The Liaison team closely monitors EJC meetings, and they are the coordination and information sharing team for their agencies. The Methodology team develops recommendations based on EJC feedback and they are responsible for index development. The Inventory team is responsible for seeking data availability based on EJC decisions and they recommend data standards. The Methodology and Inventory teams will be working closely during indicator selection.
- Q5: How will the EJC determine a successful implementation by September 2025?
  - A5: The beta testing outcome will help determine whether the tool is ready to launch, and functions as intended. The EJC will make this decision.
- Q6: How will the EJC determine who should have access to more sensitive data?
  - A6: We first need to determine if there will be sensitive data included in the mapping tool (and/or the EJ index). We can then come up with options for using sensitive data. There are some existing mapping tools that aggregate sensitive data (e.g., threatened, and endangered species data) at broader geographic scales.
- Q7: Can examples be provided when possible to help the EJC understand the impacts of decisions when possible?
  - A7: Yes.

Indicator Selection
- Q1: What are community assets?
  - A1: Facilities, infrastructure, and organizations in a community that can help mitigate environmental hazards and social factors.
- Q2: How is built environment connected to environmental justice?
  - A2: From Department of Environmental Quality:
    - The built environment is vast, interconnected, complex, and interstitial to our lives. It is most commonly understood as the physical spaces we occupy, but it is also the physical and social infrastructures. The physical infrastructure supports physical spaces and our daily lives. The social infrastructure and systems inform and drive the material manifestation, as well as the outcomes and well-being of people, communities, the environment, ecosystems, and more-than-human beings.

    - Some examples of the built environment include:

- Physical: shelter, workplaces, schools, community spaces, public parks, open space
- Infrastructure: roads, rail, transit, energy, waste, internet, paths
- Social: places for gathering, worshiping, celebrating, mourning, protesting, right to root
- Economic: development, ownership, jobs
- Structural systems: codes, policies, planning
- Human outcomes: access, agency, impacts, burdens, adaptability, vulnerability, (in)equity

Index Development

Q1: Who is included in the Methodology workgroup?

A1: The methodology workgroup is composed community of practice participants from state agencies, regional government, local public health and academic institutions. The participants are technical experts with backgrounds in data development, data analysis, and data visualization.

Q2: How are weights decided and what is the impact?

A2(1): The methodology workgroup will provide a recommendation and rationale to the EJC and the EJC will decide.

A2(2): he number of indicators in each domain can affect weighting. The impact to weighting is it will heavily influence the EJ index score.

Q3: What is the difference between climate risk and climate vulnerability?

A3: Climate risk and climate vulnerability are synonymous in Colorado EnviroScreen.

Q4: Why include the built environment in the Oregon EJ Mapping tool?

A4: From Methodology Workgroup rationale:

The built environment is indirectly mentioned in HB 4077 in the definition of EJ communities as "communities with limited infrastructure."

Oregon natural resources agencies whose primary focus is the built environment will be better equipped to contribute to and use the EJ Mapping Tool with the inclusion of a built environment subdomain.

Federal grants from the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law prioritize built environment investments that advance environmental justice in communities, improve health and equity, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Q5: How will geographic units impact identification of environmental justice communities?

A5: Oregonians generally don't identify their community within the geographic units that data are available.

Q6: What are examples of challenges displaying information with health privacy and security concerns? What are the potential consequences of sharing this information and how can they be mitigated?

A6(1): OHA has privacy rules that dictate whether data can be displayed when there are small numbers. There must be at least 10 cases and a population of 50 in any geographic unit. Health outcome categories can be broadened to increase the number of cases and/or years of health data can be aggregated.

A6(2): Tribal data will not be displayed in the EJ mapping tool without consent of the tribes.

Q7: Is it possible to include analysis of political power? Examples: Voting, voter registration, elected officials, community-based organizations, etc.?

A7: In the first iteration, we are going to rely on the language of the legislation. Some elements of political power could be integrated into the potential domain "People", but much of this information will be based on data meeting criteria recommended by the EJ Mapping Methodology workgroup.

Community Listening Sessions

> Q1: Who will be involved in listening sessions and what is the focus?
>> A1: Communities will be the focus and CBOs and state agencies will be invited to recruitment and observing the listening sessions so they can be responsive to communities.
> Q2: How were the focus groups for the ORESA Mapping and Reporting Tool developed?
>> A2: The focus groups were identified by the project's steering committee, with leadership from the Oregon Department of Energy and Department of Defense (project co-sponsors).

Tool Development

> Q1: What is the base tool being used to develop the EJ mapping tool?
>> A1: The base tool is developed with VertiGIS software, which sits on top of the underlying ESRI ArcGIS Server technology. The Oregon Explorer program supports the annual license to this GIS software for most of the mapping and reporting tools they have developed in partnership with others.
> Q2: Is it possible to make this information password protected?
>> A2: It is possible but not recommended because of the level of user management required.
>> Q3: Will community-based organizations and State agencies have a chance to beta test prior to full implementation?
>> A3: Absolutely. We will plan for beta testing with a select number of users who have not yet interacted with the tool. We will plan for beta testing one to two months prior to the launch of the tool (version 1). The EJC can recommend beta testers from the primary and secondary user groups.

Data Updates and Tool Enhancements

> Q1: Is there funding needed from the Oregon Legislature needed for future development?
>> A1: Funding will be needed to both maintain the tool and develop future versions of the tool.
> Q2: How often is data updated for the index?
>> A2: It depends on the data type and source of the data. For example, American Community Survey is updated annually. However, the index is required to be refreshed every 4 years per HB4077.
> Q3: How often will data updates be made for the Oregon EJ Mapping Tool?
>> A3: Depends on how data is hosted and associated data maintenance schedules. There will be a spreadsheet developed and maintained listing all spatial data used in the mapping and reporting tool to track the data sources and date of last update. Updates can be made annually, if needed (and if funding is available).