

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Environmental Justice Policy

In accordance with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Act (“MWRD Act”) and to advance the District’s Strategic Plan, the District hereby adopts an Environmental Justice Policy. The objective of this policy is to integrate environmental justice considerations into all District programs, policies, and activities to the extent practicable and permitted by law.

For purposes of this policy, the District adopts the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s definition of environmental justice. **Environmental Justice** (“EJ”) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

The District will prioritize the EJ principles of fair treatment and meaningful involvement by implementing the best practices set forth below. These best practices are not exhaustive, and they may not apply to every District program or project. This policy is intended to inform District decision-making and to provide an adaptive approach for promoting a more effective, efficient, and consistent consideration of EJ across all District operations.

- Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from District operations or policies. In furtherance of fair treatment, the District will follow these best practices:
 - In planning and implementing District programs, policies, and activities, consider ways to expand access to District resources across the entire service area and to avoid adverse effects on minority and/or low-income populations.
 - If adverse effects are identified, consider whether any reasonable alternatives would avoid or mitigate those impacts. For example, mitigation measures may include (as appropriate, depending on the activity): identifying alternate locations or sites; altering the timing of activities to accommodate community concerns; incorporating pollution prevention practices or policies to reduce the size or intensity of an action or its impacts; incorporating measures recommended by the community or other governmental entities.
 - When implementing measures to prevent or mitigate adverse effects, consider developing a monitoring plan to track performance and outcomes.
 - Offer additional outreach and technical assistance, where needed, to local governments in minority and/or low-income communities to increase participation in District programs and compliance with District ordinances.
- Meaningful involvement means that people have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health; the public’s contribution can influence the District’s decision; community concerns will be considered in the decision-making process; and decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected. In furtherance of meaningful involvement, the District will follow these best practices:

- Conduct early and diligent efforts to meaningfully engage potentially affected individuals, organizations, and minority and low-income populations. Working cooperatively with local municipalities is critical to facilitating effective engagement because they can help identify stakeholders and community priorities.
- Identify and address, as appropriate, concerns such as geographic, linguistic, or other barriers to achieve meaningful engagement. For example, when public meetings are scheduled, consider choosing meeting locations and times that are local, convenient, and accessible to potentially affected populations. Documents related to the program or activity should be written in plain, clear language. Interpretation and translation services at public meetings should also be considered, as may be appropriate for the community.
- Use media suitable to reach potentially affected minority and low-income populations (e.g., local newspapers, radio programs, civic centers) to notify the community about a proposed program or activity.
- When community concerns are raised, provide feedback indicating why the District plans to undertake a certain course of action after considering all relevant information.

To implement the best practices described above for capital improvement projects and programs (e.g., stormwater management projects, infrastructure rehabilitation projects, etc.), the District will also consider available mapping tools and metrics, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s “EJScreen” tool, and the District’s Disproportionately Impacted Area (“DIA”) map, which is based on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s socioeconomic data and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s Flood Susceptibility Index. These resources will be used to help the District better understand the communities that it serves and to align capital projects and programs with the EJ principles described above.

This policy will be implemented in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, as amended from time to time, and is not intended to modify any of those laws or to impose any new legal requirements. This policy will be provided to new employees during onboarding and orientation.

Dated this 19th day of January, 2023