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November 23, 2022

White House Releases Version 1.0 of Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool

The Biden-Harris administration launched Version 1.0 of its [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST) on Tuesday, November 22, 2022. This tool is a key component of the administration's environmental justice commitments created in section 219 of [Executive Order 14008](#) (E.O. 14008), which states that "[a]gencies shall make achieving environmental justice part of their missions by developing programs, policies, and activities to address the disproportionately high and adverse human health, environmental, climate-related and other cumulative impacts on disadvantaged communities, as well as the accompanying economic challenges of such impacts." Section 222 of E.O. Order 14008 directed the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) to create the CEJST as an interactive geospatial mapping tool that uses census tract-level data to identify communities that are disadvantaged (meaning "marginalized, underserved, and overburdened"). The tool uses datasets as indicators of burdens, which are organized into categories. Version 1.0 of the CEJST adds burdens and datasets that expand the number of disadvantaged communities. Companies can utilize this tool to proactively identify decisions or projects that could have a disproportionate impact on environmental justice communities.

Justice40 Initiative and the CEJST

The administration first adopted the term "disadvantaged community" in the Justice40 Initiative (Justice40), which was established under section 223 of E.O. 14008 and aims to deliver at least 40% of overall benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy to disadvantaged communities. Justice40 [covers](#) hundreds of federal programs, including those that were funded or created in the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) and [Inflation Reduction Act](#).^[1] The CEJST is currently being used to support consistency and uniformity across all federal agencies as they implement their Justice40 covered programs.^[2]

Communities are considered disadvantaged if they are in a census tract that meets the threshold for at least one of the tool's categories of burden and corresponding economic indicator or are on the lands of a federally recognized tribe. The [categories](#) under which a community will be identified as "disadvantaged" include climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development.

Version 1.0 Reflects Public Input

Version 1.0 of the CEJST updates a beta version of the tool released in February 2022 based on feedback from federal agencies, tribal governments, the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council (WHEJAC), environmental justice stakeholders, and the public. Updates to the CEJST include:

- **Adding tribal nations.** To respect tribal sovereignty and self-government and to fulfill federal trust and treaty responsibilities to tribal nations, Version 1.0 designates land within the boundaries of federally recognized tribes as disadvantaged on the map. Alaska Native Villages are included as point locations that are smaller than a census tract.
- **Adding new data on indicators of burden.** Version 1.0 includes nine new datasets to identify burdens related to:
 - Projected climate risks data that show flooding and wildfire risks.

- Transportation barriers data, using a dataset from the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) own mapping tool.
- Lack of greenspace data that helps to identify nature-deprived communities.
- Lack of indoor plumbing data to better identify communities with low-income households that lack access to critical infrastructure.
- Redlining data to identify communities that have faced historic underinvestment.
- Legacy pollution data that show communities close to abandoned mines and formerly used defense sites.
- Water pollution data based on information about underground storage tanks that may leak.
- **Making changes to improve accuracy.** Version 1.0 makes changes to enhance accuracy and ensure communities are not overlooked:
 - Includes communities that are completely surrounded by other disadvantaged communities and meet an adjusted low-income threshold.
 - Removes students enrolled in higher education in the calculation of low income.
- **Adding data for U.S. territories.** Version 1.0 includes additional data for U.S. territories and removes linguistic isolation from the factors the tool will consider for Puerto Rico in response to stakeholder feedback.
- **Enhancing user interface.** Version 1.0 makes improvements to the user interface, including:
 - Displaying race and age demographics for census tracts.
 - Improving the design of the map side panel.
 - Improving the tool's zoom functionality.
 - Adding a geolocation feature.

The CEJST will continue to be updated based on public feedback and through analysis of a newly launched National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) [Committee](#), which will analyze how environmental health and geospatial data can continue to improve the tool.

Endnotes

[1] Justice40 is led by the Executive Office of the President and the White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council.

[2] The White House issued [Interim Implementation Guidance for the Justice40 Initiative](#) on July 21, 2021. All Justice40 covered programs are required to engage in stakeholder consultation and ensure that community stakeholders are meaningfully involved in determining program benefits. Covered programs are also required to report data on the benefits directed to disadvantaged communities.

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