

Commission on Environmental Justice

Non– State Agency Commissioners (Discuss the EJ Questionnaire from state agencies)

Minutes

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

CONFERENCE CALL-IN: 888-494-4032

Access Code: 6552044636

- I. Welcome**
Kimberly Wasserman – Chairman, EJ Commission

- II. Introductions**
 - A. Teleconference**
 - Kim Wasserman
 - Veronica Kyle
 - Dr. Sylvia Washington
 - Alec Messina
 - Sharonda Williams
 - Ken Page

- III. Discussion about Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) environmental justice questionnaire**
 - Dr. Washington – concerned about the Forest Preserves in the western counties/suburbs.
 - Veronica Kyle – concerned about neglected parks and clean-ups in park areas.
 - Veronica Kyle – Faith –n- Place has collaborated with IDNR and planted native plants, butterfly gardens, etc. They have received grants to further educational programs.
 - IDNR needs to get more information out to the public on their programs, especially urban programs, grants, etc.
 - Maybe IDNR can provide a clearinghouse on their website about other parks (city, county and state).
 - IDNR needs to incorporate EJ into their permitting process.
 - Alec Messina – cumulative impact?
 - On the mining and fracking permits (How is EJ incorporated into the process).

- Veronica Kyle – How does state agencies incorporate EJ in Urban areas.
- What jurisdiction does IDOT have over parks (city, county and state)? What parks do they control?
- Information needs to be posted about the past and current history about environmental impacts to parks.

IV. Discussion about Illinois Department on Aging (IDOA) environmental justice questionnaire

- Dr. Washington - There is not enough communication to the elderly on climate change. This population is very vulnerable to changes in the climate.
- Dr. Washington – concerns about indoor air quality in buildings designated for seniors.
 - a. Building materials
 - b. Paints (VOC's)
 - c. Treated woods
 - d. Types of building materials used in the past (asbestos, etc.)

V. Discussion about Illinois Department of transportation (IDOT) environmental justice questionnaire

- Intermodal rail expansion (has CSS been used?)
- Red Line expansion (has CSS been used/)
- What is IDOT's EJ program?
- What is the definition and explanation of CSS
- How does IDOT make sure that minority contractors are working on projects?
- How does IDOT assess the impacts of projects on low-income and minority communities? How do you make sure that there is greater public participation?
- Will the quarterly meetings that IDOT have with Gamaliel be open to other groups?
- IDOT needs to share the community impact assessments?

VI. Written Comments

See comment below in Attachment "A" comments from dr. Sylvia Washington

VII. Next Meeting(s)

- Wednesday, May 7, 2014 meeting for environmental groups. These are groups that are not on the EJ Commission

- Thursday, May 8, 2014 meeting for non-state agency EJ Commissioners. Will discuss the IEPA, IDPH and DCEO.

VIII. Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am

Attachement “A”

(Comments from Dr. Sylvia Washington)

I. Discussion about IDNR environmental justice questionnaire

A. Is IDNR an agency you have experience working with on environmental justice issues? If so please speak about your experience.

B. IDNR’s permitting programs assess project impacts on all communities which would include low-income and minority communities. Are there opportunities for an environmental justice process to be implemented into IDNR’s permitting programs? **Yes. For ex-urban/suburban communities where there has been historic dumping or the creation of landfills in forest preserve areas (Blackwell Forest Preserve or Mallard Lake) there should be an ongoing update of the history and status of the environmental status of these sites for new residents that could be potentially impacted. For instance update residents about vinyl chloride contamination of well waters from older landfills that did not have liners.**

C. Based on the information provided by IDNR in their environmental justice questionnaire can you think of spaces for the agency to incorporate environmental justice initiatives? E.g. IDNR’s answer to the question below:

The Mud-to Garden project is an example of how state agencies can work together to address an environmental justice concern. Can you give an example of an opportunity where your agency could partner with one or more agencies on the EJ Commission to address an environmental justice concern? **Restoration of “brown fields” and marginal properties can do more to expand green corridors and provide connections to high quality areas so that animal populations can move throughout the regions.**

D. What is the next step for IDNR to coordinate efforts with community organizations to address environmental justice? **Reach out through surveys to suburban communities like West Chicago, Naperville, Winfield, Aurora and Elgin and elicit the current and past environmental concerns about their natural resources like radon contamination of aquifers sourced as drinking water.**

E. Is there any clarification or further information needed on the questionnaire provided by IDNR?

II. Discussion about IDOA environmental justice questionnaire

A. Are there opportunities for IDOA to engage in environmental justice efforts?

B. Is there any clarification or further information needed on the questionnaire provided by IDOA?

III. Discussion about IDOT environmental justice questionnaire

A. Is IDOT an agency you have experience working with on environmental justice issues? If so please speak about your experience.

B. IDOT's Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) is described as an interdisciplinary approach that is designed to work with stakeholders to develop projects or transportation facilities that fit into and reflect the project's surroundings. Do any of the Commissioners have experience as stakeholders in this process? Does this process provide a space for improved community engagement?

C. IDOT is directed by Executive Order 12898. IDOT must ensure greater public participation, improve research and data collection relating to the health of and environment of minority and low income populations, determine whether an adverse effect has a "disproportionately high" impact on minority or low income populations, and identify minimization or mitigation strategies to reduce impacts on minority and/or low income communities. Based on this statement and information provided by IDOT in their questionnaire can you think of spaces where the agency can address environmental justice? **Aurora Illinois particularly the east side of the river that has a Hispanic population exceeding 65% near the train station and along the river. There is also a need to examine supporting "share the road" bike lanes that currently do not exist.**

D. What is the next step for IDOT to coordinate efforts with community organizations to address environmental justice?

E. Is there any clarification or further information needed on the questionnaire provided by IDOT?