



# DRINKING WATER SOURCE PROTECTION PROGRAM STATE AND FEDERAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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Environmental Justice (EJ) is a statewide priority led by the [DEC's Office of Environmental Justice](#). EJ is defined as the fair and meaningful treatment of all people, regardless of race, income, national origin or color, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. New York State has implemented several initiatives to support EJ communities in protecting natural resources and combatting public health threats. The first being, [DEC's Commissioner Policy 29, Environmental Justice and Permitting](#), which provides guidance to incorporate environmental justice into permit reviews, SEQR, enforcement programs, grant programs, and public participation provisions. The [DOH](#) supports this policy by providing the Office of Environmental Justice with the review of human health data for the environmental permit process.

The Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2) intersects several Commissioner Policy 29 components, by following the steps below you can determine whether your municipality or source water falls within a Potential EJ Area. It is important to consider two possibilities, whether 1) your source water or 2) your municipality falls within an EJ Area. There are instances where the source water for a municipality is outside of its' municipal boundary. If either your municipality or your source water location is within an EJ Area, there are opportunities for additional support and funding from the state and federal government. Below you will also find recommendations on diversifying your stakeholder group and potential funding opportunities for EJ communities.

**In many communities source water exists outside of the municipal boundary. It is important to determine the EJ status of both your municipality and your source water location as additional support and funding may be available to your community.**

The steps below provide resources to determine your municipality's EJ status and eligibility for state support and funding. [The DEC's Office of Environmental Justice](#) works to address environmental issues and concerns that affect primarily low income and minority communities through grant opportunities, enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, consultation, guidance, and enhance public participation. Please refer to their website for further resources and additional information: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/public/333.html>.

1. Determine if your municipality or source water is within a [Potential Environmental Justice Area](#). Potential EJ Areas are U.S. Census block groups of 250 to 500 households each that had populations that met or exceeded at least one of the following thresholds:

- a. At least 52.42% of the population in an urban area reported themselves to be members of minority groups; or
- b. At least 26.28% of the population in a rural area reported themselves to be members of minority groups; or
- c. At least 22.82% of the population in an urban or rural area had household incomes below the federal poverty level.

To determine whether your municipality or source water falls within these thresholds, use the [DEC Infocator](#) under Public Involvement select Potential Environmental Justice Areas layer.

Additionally, you can use the [ArcGIS Webmap of the Potential EJ Areas](#), or use the New York State [GIS Clearinghouse](#) to download Potential EJ Areas data set.

2. During the formation of the stakeholder group, we encourage you to bring together individuals that are representative of your community's population. It is important to include a diverse set of knowledge and experience in order to establish an accurate vision specific to your community's needs. To accomplish this, use enhanced public participation and public notification mechanisms to communicate and bring together a diverse and representative stakeholder group. This may include:
  - a. Distributing informational flyers within the EJ Area
  - b. Contacting community organizations, community centers, or local EJ groups to help with outreach
  - c. Reaching out to places of worship or local schools
  - d. Encouraging program participants to set up an email inbox to receive comments or questions regarding the program
3. [DEC's Environmental Justice Grant Programs](#) offer competitive grants to address environmental issues, harms, and health hazards, build community consensus, set priorities, and improve public outreach and education. Specifically, the [Community Impact Grants Program](#) provides funding for projects that address environmental and public health threats in low-income and minority communities. An eligible 501(c)(3) in your community can apply to fund projects that address environmental justice related concerns including, but not limited to, environmental research, community gardens, tree plantings, education and curriculum development, urban farming training, habitat restoration, and the monitoring of air, and water quality are eligible for funding.

Additionally, the [Climate Smart Communities Program](#) and the [EPA EJ Grants and Resources](#) offer municipal funding opportunities.

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