



Exploring Climate Solutions Webinar Series

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Special series:

Equity and Environmental Justice in Climate Solutions

An Adaptation and Mitigation Framework for Climate-Vulnerable Populations in CT

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Overview

- GC3 Equity and Environmental Justice Workgroup
- Purpose of the EEJ Climate Solutions Webinar Series
- Definitions
 - Systemic Racism
 - Environmental Racism
 - Environmental Justice
 - Climate Justice
- Climate and Equity
- Climate and Health
- Cumulative Risk
- Approach to Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Planning
- Funding for Environmental Justice
- Summary



GC3 Equity and Environmental Justice Working Group

- Focus on developing resources for GC3 to enable it to incorporate equity into mitigation and adaptation planning
- We are also asking GC3 to seek funding to engage impacted communities in the planning process
- Products of Equity and Environmental Justice Working Group
 - Link to and engagement of subject area experts in various climate equity topics in the GC3 process
 - EEJ review of all working group reports
 - Additional EEJ recommendations
 - Public Participation Guidance (in-person and remote)
 - EJ Mapping Tool
 - 11 EEJ webinars and resource materials

Purpose of the EEJ and Climate Solutions Webinar Series

- Not to assign blame or instill guilt
- Explain how policies, intentional or not, got us where we are
 - History of Environmental Justice and Racial Policies in US & CT
 - Social Determinates of Health Disparities
- Describe the current realities for those most vulnerable
 - Energy Affordability
 - Future Webinars
- Provide subject area experts, ideas and tools to incorporate equity into climate planning
- Provide perspectives from special populations that should be considered in addition to African American, Latinx, and low-wealth populations
 - Indigenous peoples
 - Disabled
 - Youth and future generations

What is Systemic Racism?

- Systemic racism is not an insult, it is a description
 - Policies that involve multiple institutional disciplines that have disproportionate racial effects
- Examples of policies that have differential racial effects (i.e. systemic racism)
 - Policing policies (e.g. George Floyd's death, Breonna Taylor verdict, stop and frisk)
 - Justice system (e.g. incarceration rates)
 - Health system (e.g. uninsured rates)
 - Housing policies (e.g. access to home ownership)
 - Economic policies (e.g. wage and income gaps)
 - Financial policies (e.g. interest rates on loans)
 - Education policies (e.g. test scores, graduation rates)
 - Transportation policies (e.g. access to jobs, public transportation usage)
- All of these policies and more work together to disadvantage people of color of all income levels



Environmental racism

- Environmental Racism is Systemic Racism
- The greatest predictor of where environmental hazards are placed is the percentage of people of color, not income
 - In Connecticut (DEP, UHART studies)
 - In the United States
 - Globally
- Greater exposure to environmental hazards leads to poorer health
- Racism is a toxicant enhancer

What is Environmental Justice?

- EJ is about stopping environmental injustice and changing environmental policy to reduce disproportionate health effects



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines Environmental Justice as:

- "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."

What is Environmental Justice?

Continued

- Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences ...”



What is meaningful involvement?

- Environmental justice requires meaningful involvement
 - involvement of those most impacted in the individual, corporate, and governmental decision-making processes **in a way that can change the outcome of the process.**

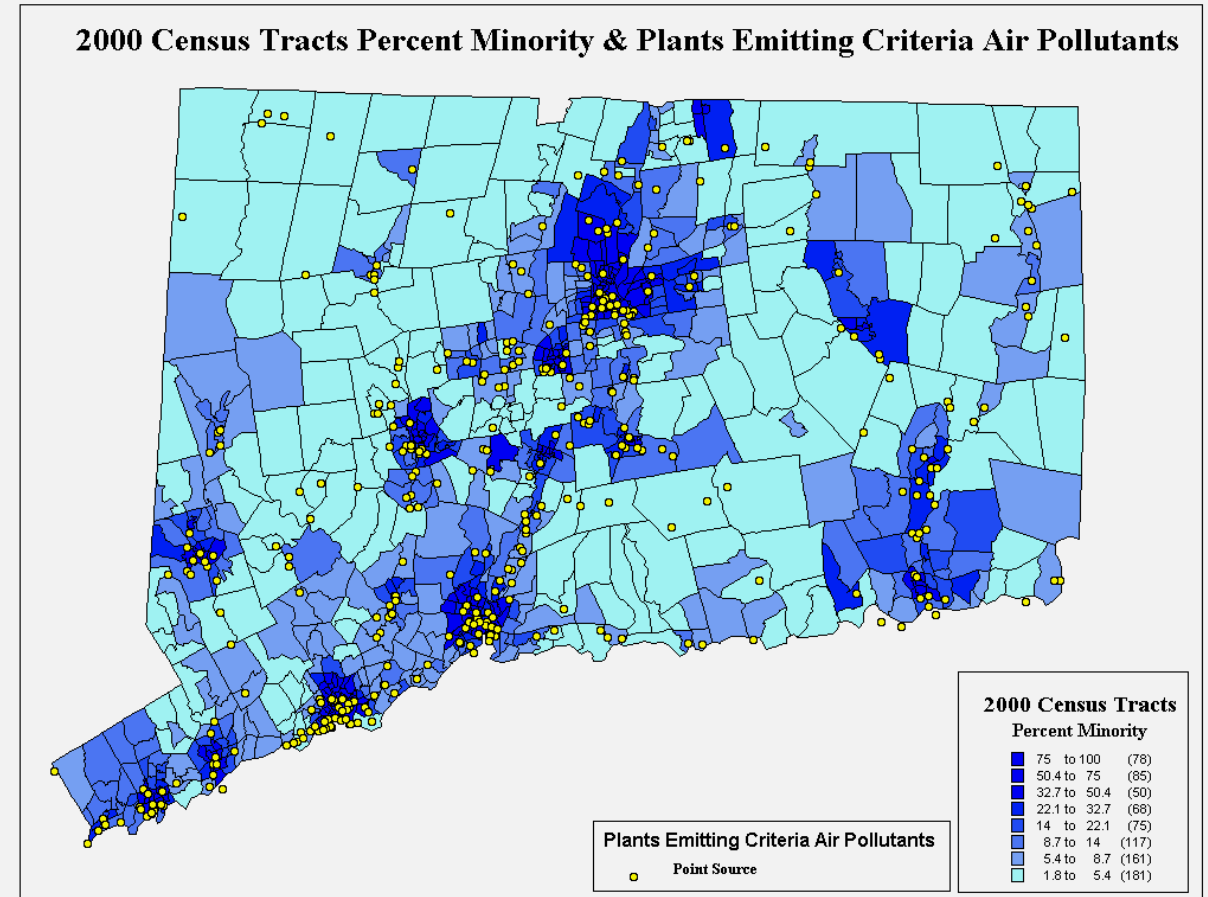


What is climate justice?

- Climate justice is simply environmental justice applied to climate change policies
- Environmental Justice organizations are community-based organizations led by people of color, low income people, or those otherwise most impacted by environmental injustice
- They often see their mission as a broad one to address the related issues of
 - Health
 - Climate
 - Economics
 - Racism

Climate Change and Equity

- Climate risks and impacts are not evenly or fairly distributed across
 - Nations
 - States
 - Communities
 - People
- Those who contribute least to GHG are affected most
- Those who contributed most to GHG are best able to escape or recover from its effects



Components of Climate Vulnerability

- Increased exposure
 - Heat, floods (inland and SLR), severe weather
- Increased susceptibility
 - Pre-existing health, social and economic conditions, SDOH
- Decreased resilience
 - Capacity to anticipate, plan for, reduce dangers of climate change effects
 - Process of planning and educating builds resilience
 - Lack of power (political and personal), resources, opportunities

Health Disparities and Environment

- West Indian/Afro-Caribbean immigrants are in better health than African Americans for one generation, then their health drops down to that of AA's
- Asthma is 50% higher in urban schools in CT when compared to rural schools
- Asthma deaths are 6 times higher in Black males between the ages of 15 and 24 than White males of that age group
- More than half of lead poisoned children in CT are Black or Latino
- Cancer, Diabetes, Lupus, Depression, ADHD, Low Birthweight, Sudden Death, etc.

Health Inequities

- Preventable differences in health outcomes resulting from policies that are
 - Unfair
 - Unjust
 - Predictable
 - Changeable
- Health Disparities may or may not be a result of health inequalities
- Health equity is equal opportunity to achieve highest health status without facing unjust policies

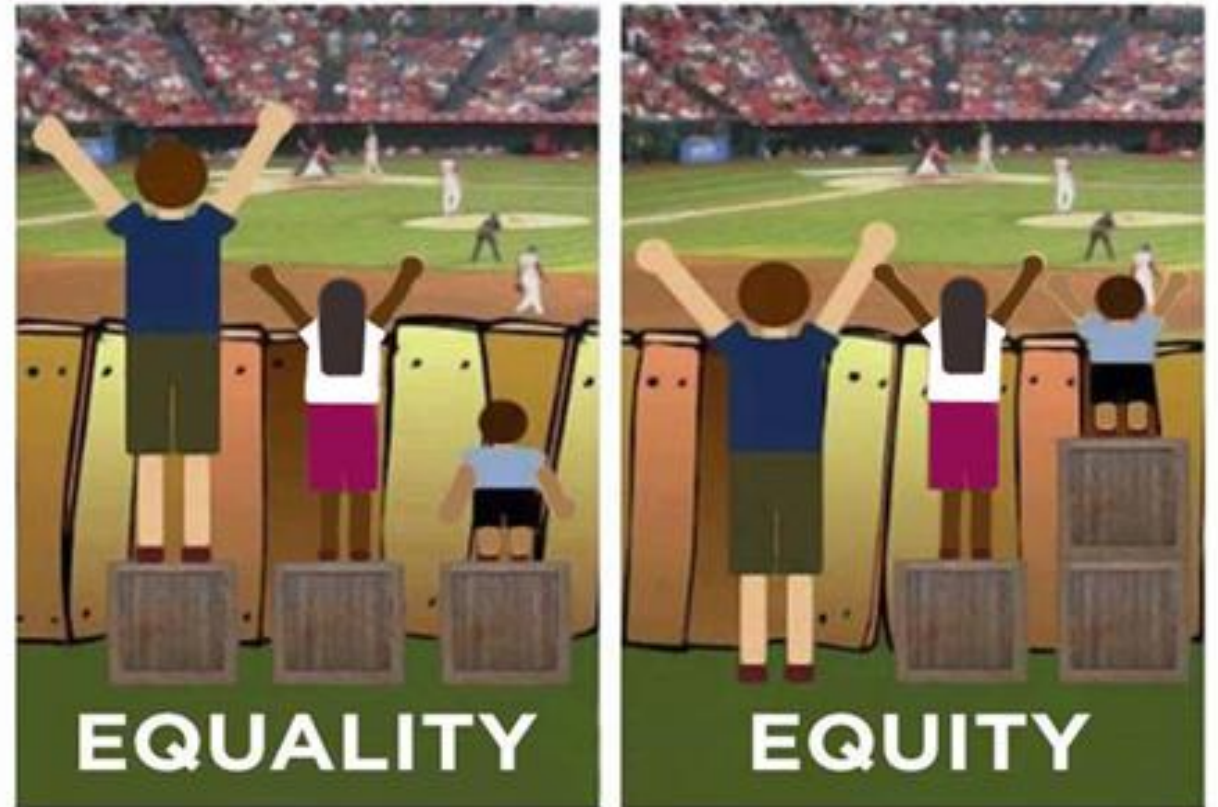


Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

- Mitigation-limit the magnitude and rate of growth of global warming by reducing or preventing GHG emissions
 - Primarily by reducing fossil fuel use (70% of GHG)
- Adaptation- building the physical, social and institutional systems to adapt to the new and predicted changes in climate
 - Minimize harm and maximize benefits

Equitable Climate Change Policies

- Equality vs Equity
- Many of the same systems that will need changes in policies, procedures and practices to make them more climate change resistant are the systems that need policy change to make them more equitable



Social Determinates of Health Mnemonic

THESEUS(S)

T: Transportation (e.g. auto, bus, taxi)

H: Housing (e.g. homeowner, renter, housing stock, living arrangements)

E: Eating (e.g. typical nutrition/diet, adequacy of food supplies, food deserts)

E: Education (e.g. educational attainment, literacy, numeracy, health literacy)

S: Safety (e.g. interpersonal, physical, community, environmental)

E: Economics (e.g. current and long-term financial assets, daily expenses)

U: Utilities (e.g. electricity, gas, water, cooling, phone, internet)

S: Social Supports (e.g. family, friends, work, religious, recreation, community)

S: Social Stressors (racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism)

Cumulative Risk

- Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC) are more likely to be exposed to a combination of multiple environmental, social, economic and other SDOH risks that have cumulative effects
- These exposures significantly increase health and safety risks
- These groups currently face differential enforcement of laws and policies (e.g. accountability for Breonna Taylor's murder)
- BIPOC bear the burden of a history of racial laws, treaties, policies and practices that prevented them from acquiring wealth, and attaining the level of health and power as other Americans.
- This partially explains why African Americans are at greater risk from environmental health threats at every income level.
- This is discussed in more detail in other webinars in this series.

Approach to Equitable Mitigation and Adaptation Planning

- Planning for the most vulnerable will reduce suffering and save the most lives
- Which populations are vulnerable vary by threat and geographic location
 - These populations often have the experience, expertise and information needed to develop more effective plans
- Hyper-local adaptation planning is needed
 - Threats and responses vary widely across the state
 - There should be state funding to pay for planning for each town
 - The people most affected need to be included in planning from the beginning
 - There should be state funding to engage geographic and specialized grassroots CBO's
- Priority should be given to adopting climate policies that provide the most immediate health and other benefits to those already impacted

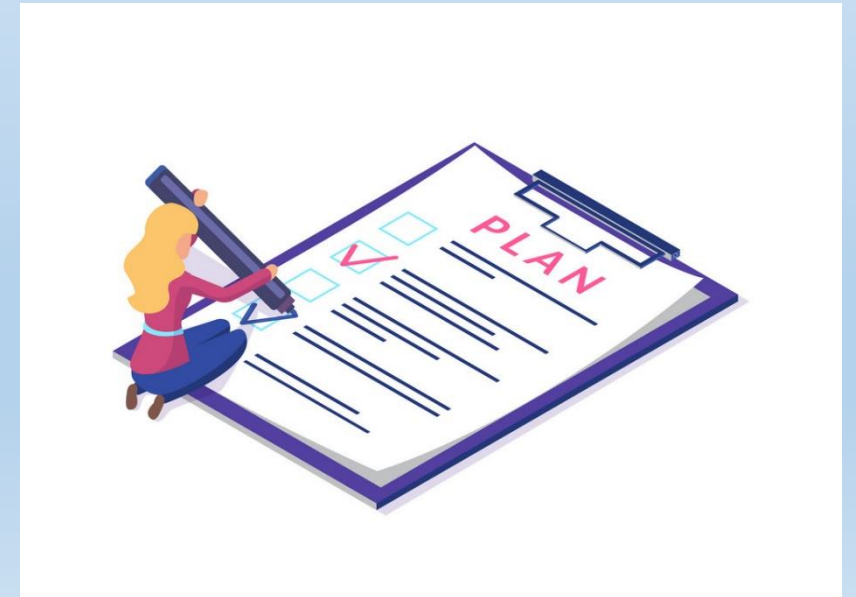


Approach to Equitable Mitigation and Adaptation Planning

- Requires a top down and bottom up approach
 - The best adaptation plans require local knowledge and support
 - GC3 can provide guidance, tools, support and seek financing for these efforts
- Engage those who are most affected and their representatives in the planning process
 - They can identify errors, oversights, and weaknesses in plans
 - They will provide insight into unintended consequences
 - They can often provide more effective messages, messengers, and solutions
 - They can help prioritize among potential adaptation actions and messages
 - They can build political support for implementation of priority actions
- This requires funding for outreach and training, as well as to compensate people for their time and expertise

Adaptation Planning

- Identification of climate vulnerabilities can build resilience, even before implementation of an action plan
 - Vulnerable people can take action, or monitor a threat and react sooner.
 - Plan helps in communication, coordination, and prioritization.
- Vulnerability plans help communities
 - Respond to opportunities for funding
 - Educate those most vulnerable
 - Act to mitigate the vulnerabilities as a part of other unrelated efforts



Program Implementation

- Need a variety of programs for a variety of types of households and organizations
- Programs should be designed to work together to make them more user friendly (e.g. common application forms/income eligibility criteria)
- Mitigation funding should not go primarily, if at all, to wealthy households
- Adaptation funding should be proportional to the needs

Funding for Environmental Justice

- Environmental justice organizations in CT have been severely hampered by a lack of funding
- State and private funding is needed
 - It is critical to get state funding to educate and engage those most impacted in the GC3 planning process, especially on the local level
 - There are a very few foundations that fund EJ in Connecticut
 - Encouragement and letters of support from GC3 or government can help
- Nationally, some EJ organizations have been funded by lawsuit settlements
- DEEP or EPA business and industry fines can be directed to EJ foundations
- The CT EJ Law needs to be updated to provide funding mechanisms

Summary

- Those who are most vulnerable to climate change are often those who have contributed the least to the problem
- The approach to mitigation and adaptation planning should be a top down and bottom up approach with state and local plans
- GC3 should continue to develop resources to support this approach
- Those most affected should be supported to engage in GC3 state and local processes to achieve the most effective plans
- The most equitable climate solutions focus on providing immediate health benefits to impacted communities
- Future EEJ webinars will provide more specific insight, resources, and tools to achieve equitable climate solutions. Please join us!



Thank You!

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