

RCW 70A.02.010 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Council" means the environmental justice council established in RCW 70A.02.110.

(2) "Covered agency" means the departments of ecology, health, natural resources, commerce, agriculture, and transportation, the Puget Sound partnership, and any agency that opts to assume all of the obligations of chapter 314, Laws of 2021 pursuant to RCW 70A.02.030.

(3) "Cumulative environmental health impact" means the combined, multiple environmental impacts and health impacts on a vulnerable population or overburdened community.

(4) "Environmental benefits" means activities that:

(a) Prevent or reduce existing environmental harms or associated risks that contribute significantly to cumulative environmental health impacts;

(b) Prevent or mitigate impacts to overburdened communities or vulnerable populations from, or support community response to, the impacts of environmental harm; or

(c) Meet a community need formally identified to a covered agency by an overburdened community or vulnerable population that is consistent with the intent of this chapter.

(5) "Environmental harm" means the individual or cumulative environmental health impacts and risks to communities caused by historic, current, or projected:

(a) Exposure to pollution, conventional or toxic pollutants, environmental hazards, or other contamination in the air, water, and land;

(b) Adverse environmental effects, including exposure to contamination, hazardous substances, or pollution that increase the risk of adverse environmental health outcomes or create vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change;

(c) Loss or impairment of ecosystem functions or traditional food resources or loss of access to gather cultural resources or harvest traditional foods; or

(d) Health and economic impacts from climate change.

(6) "Environmental health disparities map" means the data and information developed pursuant to RCW 43.70.815.

(7) "Environmental impacts" means environmental benefits or environmental harms, or the combination of environmental benefits and harms, resulting or expected to result from a proposed action.

(8) "Environmental justice" means 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, rules, and policies. Environmental justice includes addressing disproportionate environmental and health impacts in all laws, rules, and policies with environmental impacts by prioritizing vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, the equitable distribution of resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.

(9) "Equitable distribution" means a fair and just, but not necessarily equal, allocation intended to mitigate disparities in benefits and burdens that are based on current conditions, including existing legacy and cumulative impacts, that are informed by cumulative environmental health impact analysis.

(10) "Evidence-based" means a process that is conducted by a systematic review of available data based on a well-established and

widely used hierarchy of data in current use by other state and national programs, selected by the departments of ecology and health. The environmental justice council may provide input on the development of the process.

(11) "Overburdened community" means a geographic area where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts, and includes, but is not limited to, highly impacted communities as defined in RCW 19.405.020.

(12) "Significant agency action" means the following actions as identified at the beginning of a covered agency's consideration of the significant agency action or at the time when an environmental justice assessment would normally be initiated in conjunction with an agency action:

(a) The development and adoption of significant legislative rules as defined in RCW 34.05.328;

(b) The development and adoption of any new grant or loan program that a covered agency is explicitly authorized or required by statute to carry out;

(c) A capital project, grant, or loan award by a covered agency of at least \$12,000,000 or a transportation project, grant, or loan by a covered agency of at least \$15,000,000;

(d) The submission of agency request legislation to the office of the governor or the office of financial management for approval; and

(e) Any other agency actions deemed significant by a covered agency consistent with RCW 70A.02.060.

(13) "Tribal lands" has the same meaning as "Indian country" as provided in 18 U.S.C. Sec. 1151, and also includes sacred sites, traditional cultural properties, burial grounds, and other tribal sites protected by federal or state law.

(14)(a) "Vulnerable populations" means population groups that are more likely to be at higher risk for poor health outcomes in response to environmental harms, due to: (i) Adverse socioeconomic factors, such as unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, limited access to nutritious food and adequate health care, linguistic isolation, and other factors that negatively affect health outcomes and increase vulnerability to the effects of environmental harms; and (ii) sensitivity factors, such as low birth weight and higher rates of hospitalization.

(b) "Vulnerable populations" includes, but is not limited to:

(i) Racial or ethnic minorities;

(ii) Low-income populations;

(iii) Populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms; and

(iv) Populations of workers experiencing environmental harms.

[2021 c 314 s 2.]

Conflict with federal requirements—2021 c 314: See note following RCW 70A.02.005.