

## WSR 23-13-124

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

[Filed June 21, 2023, 10:38 a.m.]

## PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ON TYPES OF SIGNIFICANT AGENCY ACTIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ASSESSMENTS

COMMENTS ACCEPTED UNTIL 11:59 P.M., DECEMBER 31, 2023

Washington state's first statewide environmental justice law, the Healthy Environmental for All (HEAL) Act instructs the department of agriculture (WSDA) to conduct environmental justice assessments when considering significant agency actions.

Starting July 1, 2023, WSDA is required to complete an environmental justice assessment for the following significant agency actions named in the law:

- Adopting or developing significant legislative rules as defined in RCW 34.05.328.
- Adopting or developing new grant or loan programs initiated after July 1, 2023.
- Designing or awarding capital projects, grants, or loans of \$12 million or more.
- Developing agency request legislation.

WSDA can identify additional types of significant agency actions, in addition to the above, which will require environmental justice assessments starting July 1, 2025. We are beginning a process to identify actions that may benefit from an environmental justice assessment and there will be additional opportunities for the public to comment in the future.

We are seeking your comments and feedback on the following:

- The above list of significant agency actions.
- What other types of WSDA actions you think would benefit from an assessment starting in 2025.
- How you would like to engage with WSDA to provide your community perspective and knowledgeable impact of significant agency actions.
- How you would like to stay informed about environmental justice assessments.

While this comment period is open through December 31, 2023, we invite you to reach out to us at any time. Your input will be used to help inform decisions on conducting environmental justice assessments and how we communicate and engage with you.

**Submit written comments to [envjustice@agr.wa.gov](mailto:envjustice@agr.wa.gov).** A summary of comments will be posted to our environmental justice web page by February 1, 2024.

**About the HEAL Act:** The passage of the HEAL Act in 2021 is a historic step toward eliminating environmental health disparities and more equitably distributing health and environmental benefits among communities of color and low-income households. **It is the first law in Washington to create a coordinated state agency approach to environmental justice.**

The law covers seven state agencies: WSDA; the state departments of commerce, ecology, health, natural resources, and transportation; and Puget Sound partnership. It allows other agencies to opt in.

For more information and continued updates on HEAL Act implementation, see the WSDA environmental justice web page.

**About Environmental Justice Assessments:** The HEAL Act requires covered agencies to conduct environmental justice assessments on sig-

nificant agency actions. **Environmental justice assessments are a process that WSDA will be required to follow to determine the impacts of significant agency actions on overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.** Environmental justice assessments are intended to assist the agency with understanding disproportionate impacts, equitably distributing environmental benefits, reducing environmental harms, and addressing environmental and health disparities.