

WATER EQUITY:

RECOMMENDATIONS ON ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN ACCESS TO CLEAN, AFFORDABLE WATER

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OVERVIEW

- ▶ National Environmental Justice Advisory Council's Recommendations on Water Infrastructure Financing
 - ▶ 8 goals with recommendations
 - ▶ Buffalo Case Study
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- Several white lines of varying lengths and slopes are positioned in the bottom right corner of the slide, creating a modern, abstract graphic element.



Photos: portside.com, Baltimore Sun, Mashable, Al Jazeera, U.S. News & World report

GOVERNMENTS TREAT WATER AS A HUMAN RIGHT

- ▶ Change the culture
- ▶ Change the policy
- ▶ Enforce the Safe Drinking Water Act and Promote Municipal Water Rights Policies



Photo: Al Jazeera

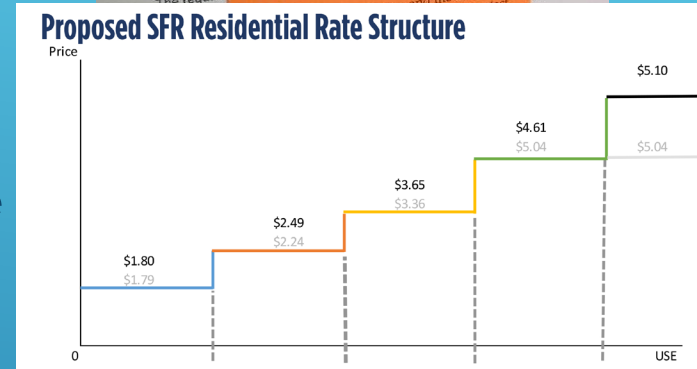
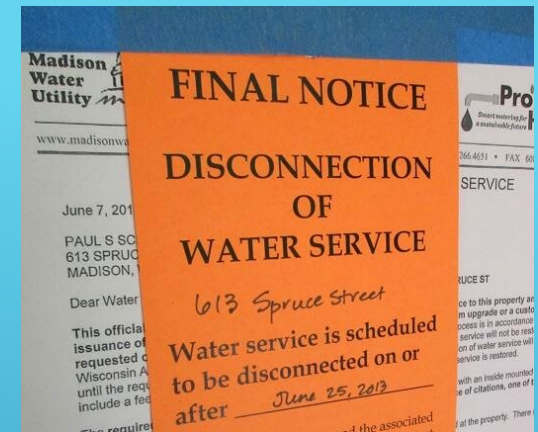
EVERY COMMUNITY ACROSS AMERICA HAS SUFFICIENT FUNDING, ALONG WITH WELL-TRAINED STAFF, TO PROVIDE SAFE DRINKING WATER AND MANAGE SEWAGE TO PROTECT PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- ▶ EPA should bring together federal, state and local government, non-profit, and community stakeholders to request Congress significantly increase its appropriations for water infrastructure investments and programs.
- ▶ EPA should encourage states to prioritize and provide grants or loan forgiveness to environmental justice communities.
- ▶ EPA should support capacity-building and apprentice programs by prioritizing grants for training and retaining water infrastructure professionals in environmental justice communities.



EVERY AMERICAN HAS ACCESS TO RUNNING WATER IN THEIR HOME AT AN AFFORDABLE PRICE

- ▶ EPA should strongly condemn the practice of utilities and municipalities shutting off water to vulnerable low income residents and encourage water utilities to implement effective customer affordability programs.
- ▶ EPA should encourage municipalities and utilities to adopt equitable rate structures.
- ▶ EPA should update its affordability measures based on low income affordability ratios
- ▶ EPA should urge states to require companies who bottle water in a state to contribute to help ensure all state residents have access to affordable, clean water.



Affordability



EPA AND THE STATES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFY WATER ISSUES IN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES AND PRIORITIZE THEM FOR FUNDING

- ▶ EPA should filter its current data and tools through an environmental justice lens to identify water issues in environmental justice communities.
- ▶ EPA should include drinking water issues in EJSCREEN.
- ▶ EPA should encourage municipalities and other water utilities to use the Health Impact Assessment Framework.



EPA AND STATES WILL MEANINGFULLY INVOLVE COMMUNITIES IN DECISION-MAKING FOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT



- ▶ EPA should facilitate local and regional partnerships as a strategy of meaningfully engaging with the community.
- ▶ EPA and local water authorities should change their public input processes to meaningfully involve impacted communities.
- ▶ EPA should encourage Regional Offices to make frequent and personal contact within EJ communities.
- ▶ EPA and states should provide education grants for technical associations to educate local residents and utilities about drinking water and wastewater infrastructure solutions.
- ▶ To best encourage and support partnerships, EPA should serve as a helpful resource, reaching out to offer support and providing information.



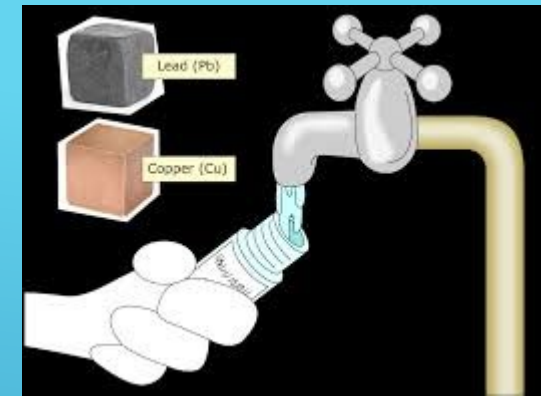
EPA AND COMMUNITIES SUCCESSFULLY BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO ENSURE ALL WATER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS ARE VIABLE LONG-TERM

- ▶ EPA should encourage water utilities to use best practices by offering trainings and supporting existing successful training programs like the Water Boards Leadership Institute.
- ▶ EPA should encourage communities to share lessons learned
- ▶ EPA should consider supporting partnerships where efficiently run water utilities acquire failing systems.
- ▶ EPA should help EJ communities secure funding to support capacity building.
- ▶ EPA should encourage Regional Offices to facilitate partnerships
- ▶ EPA should design and implement EJ training modules to bring together stakeholders.
- ▶ EPA should facilitate EJ communities to engage in more effective emergency response planning for water.
- ▶ EPA should design and implement effective quarterly outreach trainings for all Regions' EJ and Capacity Development Coordinators.
- ▶ EPA should direct the Regional Offices to conduct an aggressive campaign of significant, sustained outreach by each Region's EJ coordinator to local municipal governments about water infrastructure.
- ▶ EPA should update and expand its web-based engagement tools to consider and incorporate environmental justice issues.
- ▶ EPA should assist communities in providing job training opportunities to ensure communities have access to qualified professionals to operate and maintain water systems.



EPA REGULATES HARMFUL TOXICS IN OUR WATERS AND SUPPORTS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS THEM

- ▶ EPA should establish a Household Action Level for lead and copper in drinking water, and support innovative local and state efforts for lead exposure prevention and lead service line replacement.
- ▶ EPA should develop legally-enforceable limits to protect people from PFOA and PFOS exposure.
- ▶ EPA should address threats from agricultural runoff pollution.
- ▶ EPA should support potable reuse projects that use advanced tertiary treatment like UV and membrane filtration to address contaminants of emerging concern.
- ▶ EPA should award innovation grants to utilities in EJ communities with limited capacity.
- ▶ EPA should target low-income homeowners and rental communities for water saving devices.
- ▶ EPA should help communities expand wastewater treatment and reuse by offering financial assistance for reuse technology.



EPA IS ACCOUNTABLE TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES



- ▶ EPA should listen and quickly respond to communities when they speak out about contamination concerns.
- ▶ EPA should enforce regulatory compliance within EJ communities.
- ▶ EPA should step in sooner when states and local government fail to protect communities from contaminated water and sewage issues.
- ▶ EPA should help educate the communities about risks to their water.
- ▶ EPA should conduct performance evaluations of Regional Administrators on their commitment to EJ communities.



CASE STUDY: BUFFALO



THE TENTATIVE PLAN

- ▶ Bills issued quarterly
- ▶ Fees will increase \$60/year January 1, 2019

Proposal:

- ▶ Change tiered rates so that some high-volume users get less of a reduction than they used to
- ▶ Income based → Fixed reduction off bill
- ▶ Customers must opt-in
- ▶ Come to office and provide proof of income
- ▶ Likely 10% participation
- ▶ Some stakeholder participation



WHAT ADVICE DO WE GIVE TO BUFFALO?

- ▶ Notes
- ▶ Get it right the first time
- ▶ Legitimate, inclusive planning
- ▶ Monthly billing options, tracking usage
- ▶ Better education on billing
- ▶ Conserve program – Atlanta example
- ▶ Opt-in programs require more outreach/think about new technology/texting
- ▶ Coordinated assistance programs- utilities
- ▶ Innovative Partnerships
- ▶ Understand how information flows, language differences between communities
- ▶ Internal training at municipal level
- ▶ Shared language/jargon
- ▶ Appreciate local priorities that may not match up with long-term planning
- ▶ Translate technical plans into user-friendly language