Background

- Environmental assessments are used to evaluate the impacts of environmental decisions.
- Current environmental assessments fail to prevent disproportionate impacts on overburdened populations.
- The Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act passed in Washington in 2021. Requires the DNR and other state agencies to implement environmental justice assessments.
- The objective is to construct a pilot environmental justice assessment.

Research Question

- What is an appropriate approach for considering environmental assessments through an environmental justice lens?

Internship & Methods

- I interned at the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. As their environmental justice intern, I created a pilot environmental justice assessment (EJA).
- I gathered information through informal interviews and conversations with DNR staff and other environmental professionals.
- I researched varying topics related to this focus because of the limited information available.

Results

- There is limited research on the topic, and no "model" assessment currently exists. While experts recognize its need and importance there is yet to be consensus on the best execution.
- Through the research available and interviews I arrived at a three-step approach that accounts for many concerns about incorporating environmental justice into environmental assessments, see Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Assessment</th>
<th>EJ Assessment</th>
<th>Post-Assessment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare assessor by presenting an environmental justice brief and definitions of terms</td>
<td>A simple yet informational assessment</td>
<td>To prevent errors and identify possible mitigation strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions and guiding questions</td>
<td>Label the potential impacts in biological, physical, and social environments</td>
<td>Assessor self-evaluation and summary of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages assessor to look beyond</td>
<td>Encourages the use of databases to back claims and rationale</td>
<td>Encourages feedback and review of assessment as needed</td>
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</table>

Figure 1 - The three-step method I deduced through analyzing recommendations and ideal visions of environmental justice assessments. Including details about the pre-assessment, EJ assessment and post-assessment, what they do, provide, and their goals.

Significance

- Increased guidance on equitable environmental evaluations.
- Contributed to the limited information on EJA’s and provided a framework to be built upon.
- Considers disproportionate impacts while understanding different power relationships historical patterns and demographics in Washington State see Figure 2.

Recommendations

- Train assessors in environmental justice.
- Continual iterations and revisions to consider unique factors.
- Go beyond offering a "seat at the table".

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