

# League of Women Voters of Virginia

## **Environmental Justice Study**

### *Contributors:*

Carolyn Caywood, LWV of South Hampton Roads

Linda Cole, LWV of Williamsburg

Joan Curry, LWV of Falls Church

Linda Rice, LWV of Williamsburg

& Debbie McDaniel-Lindsey, LWVUS Climate Interest Group, Climate Justice Team

### *Contents:*

Study proposal

Existing League of Women Voters Positions

Background: History of Environmental Justice in Virginia

Summary of Case Studies and Commonalities

Study Recommendations

Questions for Consensus

### *Appendix:*

*Table:* Summary of League Positions for Environmental Justice

#### *Case Studies*

Environmental Justice and Climate Change: Chesterfield Heights, Norfolk

Gold Mining in Virginia

Landfills' Effects on Community Health and Well-being

Nature Deficit Effects

Gas Infrastructure, Pipelines

Urban Heat Island Effect

## **Study proposal**

The Environmental Issues Group proposed to re-study LWV-VA's Natural Resources positions by using the [DEI lens](#) to see how we can effectively address continuing environmental justice issues. The League has a long-standing commitment to environmental quality and a more recent commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These intersect in environmental justice. Nevertheless, our positions do not specifically speak about environmental justice. How to use our existing positions, whether to revise any of them, and whether to add a position are questions for a study to prepare us for continuing efforts to secure environmental justice through legislative and regulatory action, and to face continuing resistance to change.

## Existing League of Women Voters Positions

In both *Impact on Issues* (LWVUS) and *Positioned for Action* (LWV-VA) several positions are grouped under the heading Natural Resources. Older positions express concern for pollution's effects on the public at large and have fleeting hints that some populations may be more greatly impacted.

The LWVUS position on "Public Participation" (p.107) supports the public's right to know about hazards and to participate in decision-making. The position thoroughly describes meaningful involvement without using that EPA phrase. However, there is no acknowledgment that some communities encounter greater barriers to participation and, in fact, may be selected by polluters for that very reason.

The League History following the LWVUS position on "Climate Change" (p.105-7) mentions working with "environmental and social justice allies." In November 2020, the League joined allies to [support](#) returning the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to its essential form prior to modification in 2020. The joint statement includes, "Critically, the assessment of cumulative (and other impacts) are essential for assessing whether the siting or operation of a project or facility will disproportionately impact Tribes, communities of color, and economically disadvantaged communities."

"Transfer of Public Lands" (p.104) adopted by concurrence with New Mexico at the 2020 Convention specifically states that environmental justice is among the issues to be assessed before any transfer of federal public lands to states or other entities. The position is, however, too narrow in scope and lacking in detail about environmental justice to apply it to other situations.

It seems clear that LWVUS takes action in support of environmental justice and that therefore the positions must support environmental justice. But without a specific position, it is hard for a state or local League to be sure what is covered.

Study members looked at other state positions but did not find anything particularly helpful. LWV New Mexico has a statement under Natural Resources, Environmental Justice: "The League believes that government must conduct its programs, policies, and activities in a manner that promotes equity and affords fair treatment, accessibility, and protection for all residents, regardless of race, age, culture, income, or geographic location." However, it is no newer than 2014 and we don't know how the League arrived at the position.

For more detail, see the Table in the Appendix.

## **Background: History of Environmental Justice in Virginia**

The environmental movement began as a love of nature and recognition that wildlife and places of natural beauty needed protection. Like many other causes, its activists were people of means with leisure time. Environmental justice has been less about landscapes and more about landfills.

While there had been protests elsewhere about environmental injustices (such as the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike where Rev. Martin Luther King was assassinated), environmental justice coalesced as a named movement in 1982. Just across the Virginia border, the state of North Carolina proposed siting a toxic waste landfill in a predominately African-American community in [Warren County](#). The community's protests drew national attention and raised awareness of the nationwide pattern of locating hazardous facilities or materials where property values were low and residents were deemed unable to defend themselves.

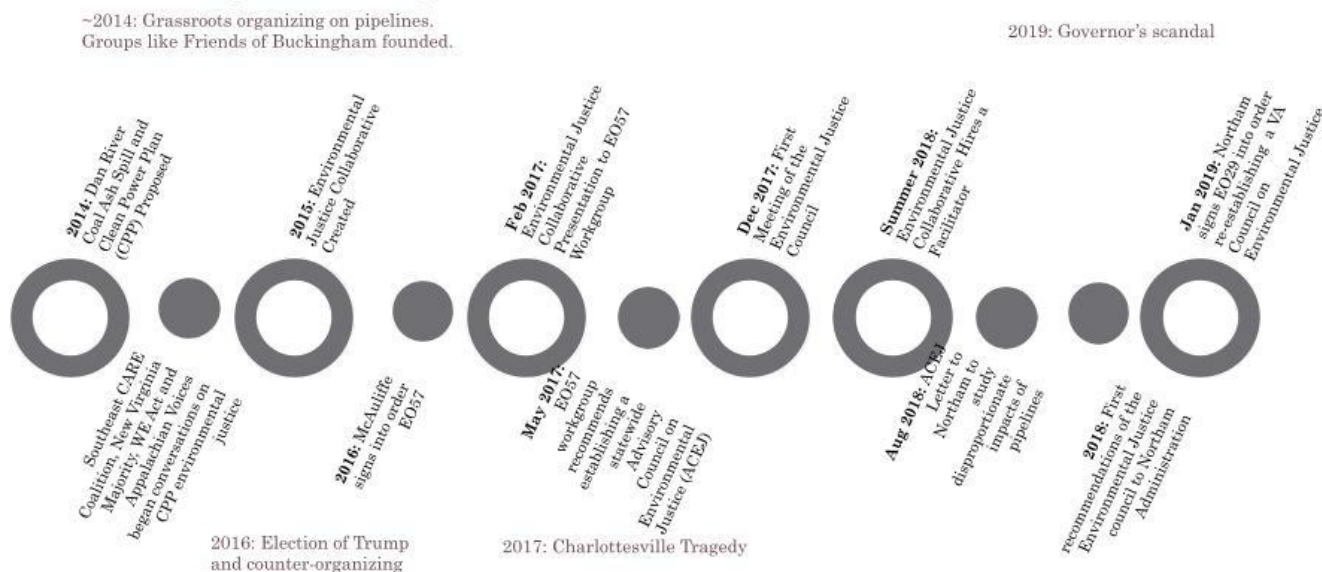
The U.S. [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA), established in 1970, has an Environmental Justice [Timeline](#) showing that in 1992, it added an Office of Environmental Equity, which in 1994 became the Office of Environmental Justice. As [defined](#) by EPA, "Environmental justice is the fair treatment 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. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys: The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work." This definition is echoed in the [Virginia Environmental Justice Act of 2020](#).

In 1982, Virginia established what became the [Department of Environmental Quality](#) (DEQ), to address air and water quality and environmental aspects of land use, under the [Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources](#). DEQ issues permits, provides technical and financial assistance, conducts inspections and monitoring, and enforces regulations and permits. The department has three [regulatory boards](#) which, since the 1990s, have been composed of Virginia citizens appointed by the Governor. They are the Virginia Air Pollution Control Board (VAPCB), State Water Control Board, and Virginia Waste Management Board. Despite this, the department's relationship with environmental justice advocates has been contentious, especially when the state issued permits despite the objections of affected communities and environmental organizations.

In the 2010s, the [Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative](#) (VEJC) argued that legislation was needed to advance environmental justice and called for creating an advisory council within the state government. VEJC itself was created in 2015 when four organizations (the Southeast CARE Coalition, Appalachian Voices, the Federal Policy Office of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, and New Virginia Majority) saw the need for statewide coordination to support Virginia

organizations addressing environmental justice issues. As part of the campaign, VEJC created a timeline of environmental justice incidents and organizing, in the context of other notable state events:

## My Perspective



*Used with permission from Queen Zakia Shabazz, Coordinator of the VEJC.*

In 2019, DEQ contracted with an outside organization to provide independent recommendations on how to incorporate environmental justice goals into DEQ strategic planning. The resulting [Environmental Justice Study report](#) was presented to DEQ and the public in October 2020. Improving communication between DEQ and affected communities was a principal theme. The report pointed out that “communities can face environmental justice issues that extend beyond one project or agency program. This report includes many recommendations on information sharing, data availability and mapping tools that can serve as resources for communities, agencies and other stakeholders to examine environmental justice issues that are not project-based or program-limited.”

The report identified nine goals and spelled out specific recommended actions under each, to be addressed in three phases. The goals are:

1. Authority: Strengthen and clarify legal and statutory authority to integrate environmental justice into DEQ programs.
2. Leadership: Foster subject matter understanding and cohesive support for environmental justice among DEQ leadership.

3. Staff Capacity: Increase staff clarity and capacity to effectively support environmental justice and apply environmental justice considerations throughout DEQ programs.
4. Guidance and Tools: Provide guidance and tools to ensure clear and consistent implementation of adopted environmental justice policies and practices.
5. Accessible Information: Develop tools to provide more transparent, accessible and real-time environmental information to the public.
6. Relationship Building: Invest in proactively building productive relationships with environmental justice and other adversely impacted communities.
7. Community Engagement: Proactively and authentically engage communities on issues and decision-making that could potentially affect their health and quality of life.
8. Environmental Justice Community Capacity: Build the capacity of environmental justice communities to participate meaningfully in environmental decision-making.
9. Local Government Coordination: Invest in local government coordination and education to ensure alignment with environmental justice policies.

DEQ began [implementing](#) the recommendations in a phased approach, hiring a Director of Environmental Justice in 2021 and staffing an [Office of Environmental Justice](#) and Environmental Justice Coordinators in DEQ's six regional offices. According to the Office, "Together, the agency will establish fair and more meaningful engagement in communities that bear a greater burden of pollution and other environmental factors." The Office [mapped](#) Virginia's "environmental justice communities." The Director met monthly with the VEJC and, since her resignation, DEQ's Director of Regional Operations has maintained the connection. A short timeline can be found on the DEQ Environmental Justice [page](#).

Also under Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources is the [Virginia Council on Environmental Justice](#). Established by Executive Order, the Council was [codified](#) by legislation in 2020. As an advisory body, its [powers and duties](#) include enhancing research; recommending statutory, regulatory, or executive action; and incorporating potential solutions to environmental justice issues related to stakeholder communication, local governments, climate change and resilience, transportation, clean energy, outdoor access, and cultural preservation, and more. The 2021–2022 transition in administrations disrupted access to the Council's documents, though access is now mostly restored.

The Council learned that state agencies like [Economic Development](#) typically don't have the capacity to review local decisions (e.g., related to land use or zoning) and assess their compliance with state requirements. While the scope of this Study is state government, the effects of regional bodies like soil and water conservation boards and planning commissions as well as local city and county governments cannot be ignored.

In addition to making the Council on Environmental Justice permanent, "The 2020 General Assembly underscored the Commonwealth's and DEQ's commitment to environmental justice by establishing the Environmental Justice Act. The Act includes enhancing the agency's statement of [policy](#) to center on environmental justice considerations related to fulfilling DEQ's environmental responsibilities," DEQ's Environmental Justice Page says. The Act created legal [definitions](#) for "[Environmental justice community](#)," "Fair treatment," "Fenceline community," and "Meaningful involvement," among others. [Language](#) in the 2020 budget "established the Interagency Environmental Justice Working Group, to be comprised of 10 environmental justice coordinators representing each of the Governor's Secretaries" to assess what it would take to develop agency-specific environmental justice policies.

In 2021, Mapping for Environmental Justice worked with the Virginia Environmental Justice Collaborative to create a cumulative impact map of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The map shows that areas that have been intentionally and systematically divested of wealth and resources, face a disproportionate pollution burden. These areas are nearly five times more likely to be exposed to air pollution from traffic and are 3.6 times more likely to live near a Superfund site.

Meanwhile, advocates' concerns were validated when, at the beginning of 2020, the Fourth Circuit Court [vacated](#) the air quality permit for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and remanded it back to the VAPCB for further review. The court warned, "But environmental justice is not merely a box to be checked, and the board's failure to consider the disproportionate impact on those closest to the compressor station resulted in a flawed analysis."

The Air Pollution Control Board took this judicial scolding to heart and, in 2021, denied the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) a permit for the Lambert Compressor Station which was to be sited in an environmental justice community in Pittsylvania County. Although this was [the first permit in 20 years](#) that the board had denied in disagreement with DEQ, the 2022 Virginia General Assembly found bipartisan support for a bill that stripped the citizen boards of their permitting role.

Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources oversees several other departments besides DEQ. The two most likely to have a role in environmental justice are the [Department of Historic Resources](#) and the [Department of Conservation and Recreation](#). Historic Resources administers the [Virginia Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Historic Preservation Fund](#) established by the 2022 General Assembly to create a grant program to protect and support Virginia's historically underserved and underrepresented communities and the cultural and historical sites associated with them. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has been addressing state parks' [segregated past](#). DCR also has authority

over dams and floodplains, and in that capacity hosted a discussion of the legacy effects of redlining on flooding in Richmond, [\*Place, Space, Climate Change and Race\*](#). The webinar also explored how heat mapping revealed redlining boundaries.

Other departments within Virginia's state government have also been required to examine their work from an environmental justice perspective in recent years. The 2021 General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 542, directing the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to complete a needs assessment focusing on the equitable delivery of transportation services and modernization of transit in the Commonwealth. DRPT has now published the Virginia Transit Equity and Modernization Study.

Because of the legislation passed in 2020, Virginia is now better positioned structurally to remediate its history of overburdening environmental justice communities with the type of activities that no one wants in their proximity, whether toxic or simply noxious. But it is also clear that the political goals of the executive and the legislative branches of the Commonwealth can promote or stall implementation of these structural changes. To see how this is working in practice, the Study members explored a variety of environmental justice cases.

## **Summary of Case Studies**

The Environmental Justice Study group identified several examples of past actions which have unfairly contributed to negative environmental impacts on communities of color and other marginalized communities. Some of these have been stopped, are undergoing further study, remediation, or redesign to reduce impact, or have twisted in the political winds. We also include an example of improved climate resilience for environmental justice communities. Summaries appear below. For the detailed case studies, see the Appendix.

### ***1. Natural Gas Infrastructure – Buckingham & Pittsylvania Counties***

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) proposed to build a compressor station at Union Hill in Buckingham County. Union Hill was settled by formerly enslaved people after the Civil War on farm land where they had previously labored. Pipeline opponents formed the Friends of Buckingham County, arguing that because Union Hill is a historic Black community, the resulting air pollution would be an environmental injustice. Nevertheless, DEQ and the VAPCB issued the permit needed by the ACP. In the court case that ensued, the Fourth Circuit Court [vacated](#) the air quality permit for the ACP and set an important precedent that environmental justice concerns could not be ignored by the permitting authority.

Similarly, the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) submitted a draft air permit for the proposed construction of the Lambert Compressor Station which, if approved, would enable the extension of the 303-mile MVP project by 75 miles into North

Carolina. The site proposed for the compressor station was near Chatham, in Pittsylvania County. Opponents of the project argued that the proposed compressor station would adversely impact the health of the low-income and majority African-American residents of the county's Banister District. In response, and because of the court ruling in the similar ACP permit case, the VAPCB denied the MVP permit. On March 29, 2022, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed MVP's appeal of the VAPCB denial. On April 11, 2022, the Governor signed a bill removing permitting authority from the VAPCB and also the State Water Control Board. The MVP is currently (as of late September 2022) stalled because [Congress](#) refused to pass language that would have changed and accelerated the permitting process.

## **2. Gold Mining in Virginia – Buckingham County**

Gold has been mined commercially in Virginia from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century until 1947. The California Gold Rush in the mid-1800s had a negative impact on industrial gold mining in Virginia. However, due to the recent higher cost of gold, a renewed interest in gold mining in Virginia has occurred, specifically in Buckingham and Pittsylvania counties. In the 2021 Special Session I of the Virginia General Assembly, [HB2213](#) – Gold; Secretary of Natural Resources, et al., to study mining and processing, passed into law. HB2213 required a work group (including representatives from VCEJ; experts in mining, hydrology, toxicology, geology, and public health; environmental organizations; potentially affected communities; and Native American communities) to study the mining and processing of gold in Virginia. The [work group](#) is tasked to present its findings to the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy no later than December 1, 2022. [Concerns](#) include air and water contaminated discharges because cyanide is used in the gold extraction process and mining activity's proximity to Union Hill.

## **3. Redlining and Green Space – City of Richmond**

The legacy of the officially discontinued practice of redlining is significantly higher temperatures and heat-related illnesses as well as flooding from inadequate stormwater management in predominantly low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. A New York Times [article](#) discussed the intersection of racist redlining and climate change. "Every Black neighborhood, no matter its income level, was outlined in red and deemed a 'hazardous' area for housing loans. The appraisers' notes made clear that race was a key factor in giving these neighborhoods the lowest grade."

Richmond is currently engaging with affected neighborhoods to put racial equity at the core of the City's [climate action and resilience plan](#). The New York Times article quoted Richmond's Sustainability Manager, Alicia Zatcoff, saying that doing so "can mean confronting some very uncomfortable history"—but "the more proponents there are of doing the work this way, the better off we'll all be for it."



In 2020, city [announced a goal](#) of ensuring that everyone in Richmond lives within a 10-minute walk of a park, working with [community partners](#) to identify city-owned properties in vulnerable neighborhoods that can be converted into green space.

Green space can be transformative. A healthy tree canopy [can cool neighborhoods by several degrees](#) during a heat wave, helping to lower electric bills as well as the risk of illness and death. When planted near roads, trees can [help filter air pollution](#). And unlike paved surfaces, trees can soak up water, reducing flooding during downpours. The presence of green spaces has been shown to [reduce stress levels](#) for people living nearby. Recent [research](#) on child development has discovered that unstructured play in green spaces has health benefits and nurtures creativity, self-reliance, problem-solving skills, improved reasoning, and memory skills.

#### **4. Solid Waste Landfills – City of Bristol & Cumberland County**

Landfills used to manage solid waste can have many negative effects on human health. People living near landfills can be exposed to hazards including pathogens, endotoxins (toxins produced by bacteria), gasses, and aerosols. Microorganisms in landfills create gas as they break down waste, generating methane, carbon dioxide, sulfides, and ammonia, which pose serious health and safety threats along with unpleasant odors. Thus all three citizen boards under DEQ may have a stake in solid waste management but the [Waste Management Board](#) adopts Virginia’s waste regulations.

The [Bristol Integrated Solid Waste Facility](#), located in an old limestone quarry, opened in 1998. Starting in late 2020, thousands of residents began submitting odor complaints to the City and to DEQ. A 2021 [article](#) in *Southerly* summarized, “Residents have reported intense headaches, nausea, burning eyes and throats, nosebleeds, and other symptoms.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [Social Vulnerability Index](#), which identifies communities where economic and social factors increase vulnerability to natural hazards, ranks the Bristol census tract with the landfill as among the most vulnerable tracts in the nation, with only about 15% of U. S. census tracts receiving a higher social vulnerability score. According to the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 22% of [Bristol residents](#) live in poverty, compared to 9% in Virginia as a whole.

The Cumberland County Mega Landfill, later the [Green Ridge Recycling and Disposal Facility](#), was approved by the Cumberland County Board of Supervisors in 2018. At the end of 2019, the Green Ridge Recycling and Disposal Facility project was scaled back. The original landfill proposal would have used half of the 1,200-acre site to store 69,000,000 cubic yards of waste. The new proposal reduced the footprint of land to be disturbed to 240 acres, eliminating impacts to all primary wetlands and reducing the number of affected houses by nearly 40%.

Gravesites that may be associated with former enslaved workers on a pre-Civil War Cumberland County plantation were identified on the landfill property in an area that would not be disturbed by construction and the landfill developer committed to preserve them.

However, opposition continued, along with a failed attempt in 2021 to have the General Assembly prohibit the landfill, citing environmental justice concerns that placing the landfill near minority-race residents was an unfair burden on their community. The proposed location of the landfill is next to Pine Grove School, constructed in 1916-1917 and one of the best preserved of the Rosenwald Schools built to educate "colored" students in the South. The National Trust for Historic Preservation listed Pine Grove School as one of "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places for 2021."

### ***5. Funding Flood Preparedness – City of Norfolk***

Dating to 1915, Chesterfield Heights in Norfolk is a historic Black community of middle- and lower-income single family residences on the Eastern Branch of the industrial Elizabeth River. The western end of the community is built on long filled-in Ohio Creek which complicates flooding issues in the area, while the eastern end is a Norfolk public housing community. Nearly 900 predominantly African-American people with a median household income of about \$32,000 live in Chesterfield Heights.

In 2016, Virginia used nearly \$120 million in federal grants to implement resiliency designs for the Ohio Creek Watershed and Chesterfield Heights. To alleviate flooding, a layered approach incorporated a berm, living shoreline, and oyster reefs as part of the coastal defense strategies. Raising roadways and improving drainage keep the two primary access routes passable during major floods for residents, industrial uses, and emergency vehicles.

Given the magnitude of funding needed for project design and implementation, the General Assembly passed a measure to have Virginia join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) in 2020 in part to fund flood preparedness. With the change in state administration, Virginia's membership in RGGI has been questioned. At the same time, use of RGGI funds has been expanded to help communities in the western part of the state as well as coastal areas.

### ***Other Examples of Environmental Injustice in Virginia***

The Study group noted but did not explore in depth other recent environmental justice cases.

Rising sea level is causing [septic system failures](#) in the rural counties bordering the Chesapeake Bay and also in low-income communities that don't have access to municipal sewage systems. However, municipal sewage systems can also be a

threat as in the case of a [sewage spill](#) in Suffolk that closed traditionally Black shellfish harvesting areas.

Virginia lacks regulation of [above-ground storage tanks](#) unless they contain fuel, but deteriorating tanks store other toxic chemicals and many are located close to waterways throughout Virginia. The City of Chesapeake's predominantly Black neighborhood of [South Hill](#) was essentially destroyed by repeated tank collapses. Heightened cancer risk from exposure to toxins in the air was revealed by EPA [mapping](#) of Highland Springs, Virginia.

Legacy zoning decisions have ignored or erased the homes and communities of people of color across Virginia. In a highly publicized example, the [Brown Grove](#) community in Hanover County discovered it was slated for development as a Wegmans distribution center. But even a single home can find an incompatible land use next door, as occurred with the [Boxley asphalt plant](#) in Louisa County.

An older issue that the federal government is now moving to address is the effect of building limited access [highways](#) either through environmental justice communities or in ways that cut communities off from city services and amenities.

### ***Commonalities***

- Permitting is where Environmental Justice is addressed or ignored. Permitting agencies have favored promises of employment and money; in some cases, those promises of employment and money have not been kept and, in others, they didn't turn out as expected. Permitting agencies also have a poor track record of timely and meaningful communication with communities.
- Permitting decisions have not taken cumulative impacts into account but have treated each application as unique.
- Information sharing and coordination, both among government agencies and between state, regional, and local governments, has been weak.
- Legacy decisions and systemic racism create blind spots for government, even when there is an intention to be environmentally just.
- Localities with a small tax base often lack expertise and, despite much infrastructure being over fifty years old, cannot afford to take needed actions to address environmental and public health issues. The typical state government response is an unfunded mandate, rather than help.
- Environmental justice issues do not just include pollution by toxic chemicals – incessant loud noise, bright light at night, or strong odors can make a home unlivable. Historically, the sites and structures of low income communities and communities of color have not been valued.
- Disasters like flooding strike low-income people more frequently and harder because they were pushed into hazardous areas. In part, this echoes redlining maps and structural racism; in addition, localities depend on

property tax and thus encourage property use that will generate the highest tax revenue. This leaves only marginal areas for affordable housing.

- Climate change is accelerating land use problems, infrastructure deterioration, and water quality issues, while taxing government resources. But putting off addressing these problems multiplies their cost.
- We have good models of addressing environmental justice concerns, such as the flood resilience work in Chesterfield Heights, but they can be expensive and require time, effort, and collaboration with local communities.
- Solutions are often interconnected and may address multiple problems.

## Study Recommendations

After each recommendation we have listed the government or other entity which has the power to act. “Regional” refers to agencies like the [Soil and Water Conservation Districts](#) and [Planning District Commissions](#). Many of our recommendations do not involve legislation but rather regulatory and permitting bodies that work year around. Thus an additional recommendation is that League members learn about the organization of the executive branch and expect to advocate throughout the year, even when the General Assembly is not in session.

**1. Acknowledge** that too often environmental burdens have been greatest for those who have received the least benefit, and that this is due, at least in part, to deliberate decisions in the past. Therefore government bodies must study hazard maps, scrutinize historic zoning decisions, examine their procedures and processes, and continually work to end the perpetuation of unequal burdens on environmental justice communities. (Action – State/Regional/Local Agencies, Boards and Commissions)

**2. Require** and hold accountable state and local permitting agencies for considering *cumulative* and long-term impacts of projects and permits, including downstream impacts, rather than considering each project request only on its own, ignoring what has preceded it. Cumulative impacts can harm health as a result of degradation of air, water, and overall quality of life. Continuing to site projects and issue permits that affect the same place because the land is cheap and the residents lack capacity to oppose the decisions unjustly burdens environmental justice communities. (Action – State/Regional/Local Agencies, Boards and Commissions)

**3. Require** and hold accountable permitting agencies and boards for considering *all effects* of a project on people living adjacent to it or downstream from it. A healthy environment requires more than avoidance of safety hazards or air, water, and land pollution. Loud noises and vibrations, nighttime lights, strong odors, lack of tree canopy or green spaces, and loss of historic or cultural touchstones are among the factors that can degrade the health of a human environment. (Action – State/Local Agencies and Boards)

**4. Require** and hold accountable DEQ and other state, regional, and local agencies and boards for communicating early in a project’s inception, not only with state, regional, and/or local regulators, but with *all* other stakeholders “in the community, both organized and individual. DEQ must provide more transparent, accessible, and real-time environmental information to the public, and make significant outreach to local residents who may be unaware or lack the expertise to understand the impacts of the proposed projects. (Action – DEQ, State/Regional/Local Agencies)

**5. Implement** the recommendations of DEQ’s 2020 [Environmental Justice Study](#) and complete the first phase of actions to develop staff capacity and clear guidance “to effectively support environmental justice and apply environmental justice considerations throughout DEQ programs.” (Action – DEQ and environmental boards)

**6. Improve** information-sharing and coordination among state, regional, and local agencies responsible for agriculture, climate resilience, comprehensive planning, economic development, emergencies & public safety, environment, housing, health, parks, and transportation when evaluating projects with regard to issues such as rezoning and site location. (Action – State/Regional/Local Agencies and Boards)

**7. Provide** expertise and capacity building support to help localities with a small tax base to assess and find solutions to environmental justice issues. (Action – General Assembly, State Agencies including Higher Education)

**8. Direct** and fund independent environmental justice analyses before major permitting decisions to assess the potential for long term costs, harm to health and environmental effects on the population. Too often a project is presented with unsubstantiated claims of benefits by a developer to a local governing board. (Action – General Assembly, stakeholder organizations and coalitions)

### Questions for Consensus

1. Should LWV-VA advocate for government bodies to study environmental justice data and change procedures and processes that perpetuate unequal burdens on environmental justice communities?

Yes  No  No consensus.

Comments:

2. Should LWV-VA advocate for government bodies to be held accountable for considering *cumulative* impacts of projects and permits?

Yes  No  No consensus.

Comments:

3. Should LWV-VA advocate for government bodies to be held accountable for considering *all effects* that a project might have on people living around it?

Yes  No  No consensus.

Comments:

4. Should LWV-VA advocate for government bodies to be held accountable for communicating early in a project's inception with all stakeholders in the affected community?

Yes  No  No consensus.

Comments:

5. Should LWV-VA advocate for implementing the recommendations of DEQ's [Environmental Justice Study](#) report?

Yes  No  No consensus.

Comments:

6. Should LWV-VA advocate for improved information-sharing and coordination among state, regional, and local agencies and boards?

Yes  No  No consensus.

Comments:

7. Should LWV-VA advocate for legislation to provide expertise to help localities with a small tax base assess and find solutions in response to environmental justice issues?

Yes  No  No consensus.

Comments:

8. Should LWV-VA advocate for legislation to fund independent environmental justice analyses before major permitting decisions ?

Yes  No  No consensus.

Comments:

### **Appendix:**

Summary of League Positions for Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice and Climate Change: Chesterfield Heights, Norfolk

Gold Mining in Virginia

Landfills' Effects on Community Health and Well-being

Nature Deficit Effects

Gas Infrastructure, Pipelines

## Urban Heat Island Effect