

# Environmental Justice Strategic Plan Development Informational Webinar

Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
March 24, 2026



# Webinar agenda

- Overview of Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Explain why DNR is creating an Environmental Justice (EJ) Strategic Plan
- DNR's EJ Strategic Plan Development Process
- Opportunities for participation
- Questions



Deep Creek Lake State Park - Photo: Sarah Milbourne

# About the Department of Natural Resources

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the lead state agency tasked with protecting, conserving, and stewarding Maryland's public lands, waterways, and ecosystems.

## Vision Statement

- Inspired by nature and rooted in science to improve and grow stewardship for Maryland's natural resources.

## Mission Statement

- The Maryland Department of Natural Resources leads the state toward a resilient future by using data, partnerships, and an innovative spirit to improve ecological, social, and economic outcomes for all communities.



# About the Department of Natural Resources



## Office of the Secretary

Office of Communications  
Office of Fair Practices  
Office of Outdoor Recreation  
Resilient Systems  
Environmental Justice  
Legislative Services



## Land Resources

Maryland Park Service  
Maryland Forest Service  
Land Acquisition and Planning  
Wildlife and Heritage Service  
Maryland Environmental Trust



## Aquatic Resources

Critical Area Commission  
Fishing and Boating Services  
Resource Assessment Service  
Watershed and Climate Services



## Enterprise Services

Audit and Management Review  
Finance and Administrative Services  
Human Resources Services  
Information Technology Services  
Organizational Development  
Licensing and Registration Services



## Natural Resources Police



## Capital Project Program

Engineering & Construction

# What does the Department of Natural Resources do?



Management of public access to state lands and waters



Funding opportunities



Data, monitoring, assessments



Regulatory and Law Enforcement



Local and community planning



Community education and capacity building



Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coastal Bays



Fisheries and wildlife resources



Outdoor Recreation



# Examples of DNR's work related to environmental justice



Photo credit – Maryland Department of Natural Resources

- **Funding opportunities**, such as Greenspace Equity Program and Outdoor Equity Mini grants, targeting resources to areas that are overburdened or underserved.
- **Partnerships and engagement with communities** such as Es Mi Parque, community outreach on boater safety and fishing, state parks programming with organizations.
- **Bilingual Spanish program** for visitors and for DNR staff working with communities or individuals who speak Spanish (i.e. tree license exam, translating DNR materials, etc.).
- **Storytelling** through interpretive signage, programming.
- **Use of data and tools** to understand concerns related to state natural resources (e.g. MD EnviroScreen).
- Established the **Environmental Justice Officer** position in 2024 and created the agency's first DEIJA Statement.
- Ongoing interagency work through 5 Million Trees, Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act, Whole Watershed Act and more.

# Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility

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## Mission Statement

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## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility Statement

- The Maryland Department of Natural Resources commits to fostering a culture and workforce that is inclusive, equitable, and representative of the state's diversity. We are committed to increasing accessibility to our public lands, waterways, and natural resources for all communities to enjoy. By engaging and understanding communities that have historically been left behind, we strive to address and remove systematic barriers that perpetuate environmental injustices. Through this work, we celebrate these values within nature, our partnerships, and the communities we serve.

# Why is DNR creating an Environmental Justice Strategic Plan?

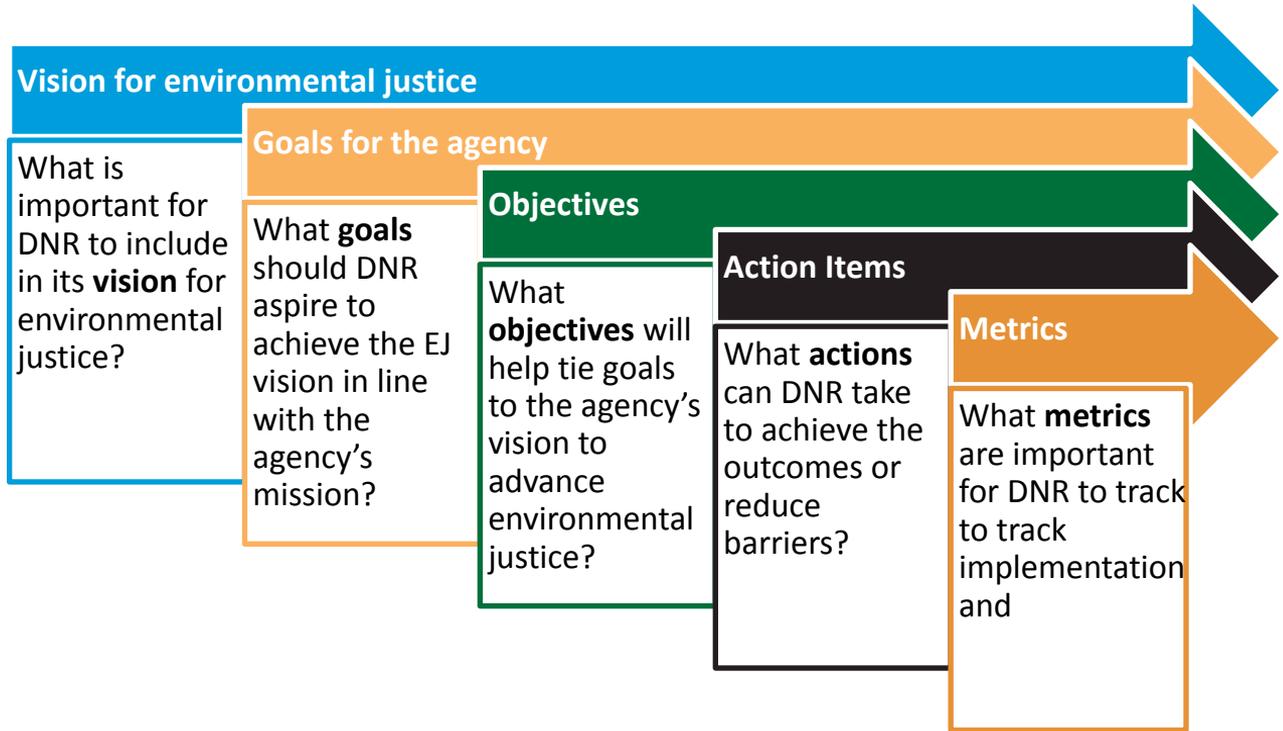
- Opportunity for DNR to define the agency's vision for environmental justice and how we will work towards this vision by creating goals, objectives, metrics, and priority actions.
- [Executive Order 01.01.2025.17 Valuing Opportunity, Inclusion, and Community Equity \(VOICE\)](#) directs agencies to create an Environmental Justice (EJ) Strategic Plan.



Governor Moore signing the VOICE Executive Order  
([Source](#) – press release)

# Elements of DNR's Environmental Strategic Plan

## Key elements of the plan



## Factors that will influence the plan:

- DNR's mission and authorities.
- Input provided from community partners, individuals in the pre-draft phase.

# EJ Strategic Plan Development Process



## PRE-DRAFT PHASE



**Goal:** Information gathering, alignment (internal/external)



**Audiences:** Familiar partners, internal DNR staff, interagency partners



**Engagement methods (External):** Webinar, 1:1 meetings, scoping survey



**Engagement methods (Internal):** Internal assessment, leadership discussions, interagency meetings



## DRAFT PHASE



**Goal:** Review and input on draft plan



**Audiences:** Internal and external (broad)



**Engagement methods:**  
Internal and interagency review  
External - public draft release, comment period

# Pre-draft engagement opportunities



Photo credit – Maryland Department of Natural Resources



- Pre-draft input will guide how DNR draft's the EJ Strategic Plan
- [Pre-draft scoping survey](#) – **complete by April 17, 2026**
  - What issues are important to you or the communities you work with?
  - What can DNR do to advance environmental justice?
  - What ways should DNR track and share with the public our work?
- Other opportunities – [request a meeting or provide comments via this form](#)
  - Share additional information or discuss questions.
  - Any comments that you'd like to provide after the survey closes

# Opportunities for participation

Opportunity	Phase	Description	How to Participate
<b>DNR Environmental Justice Strategic Plan Scoping Survey</b>	Pre-draft phase	DNR is conducting a scoping survey to understand what environmental and natural resource management issues matter to communities and our partners in Maryland and input on what DNR could do to further environmental justice through the agency's work. The survey responses this survey will inform the draft EJ Strategic Plan that DNR develops.	Take survey using <a href="#">this link</a> by 4/17/202.
<b>Meetings or presentations on request</b>	Pre-draft and draft phase	Meeting to discuss DNR's draft strategic plan development or draft or presentation to provide background for a smaller audience.	Request a meeting using this <a href="#">form</a> or emailing <a href="mailto:EJ.DNR@maryland.gov">EJ.DNR@maryland.gov</a> .
<b>General feedback via form</b>	Pre-draft and draft phase	Provide comments at anytime to DNR's EJ Officer using the form.	Submit comment using this <a href="#">form</a> or emailing <a href="mailto:EJ.DNR@maryland.gov">EJ.DNR@maryland.gov</a> .
<b>Public comment on full draft plan</b>	Draft phase	DNR will host a public comment period for anyone to submit feedback on the draft plan. Feedback can be submitted via email, meetings or using the form.	DNR will send an email to attendees of the webinar and post on our <a href="#">website</a> when the draft is available for public review.



# Next Steps

After information gathering is complete, DNR will draft the EJ Strategic Plan and share for public review.



# Questions?

Thank you

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Photo credit - Sumi Selvaraj