



Know your environment.
Protect your health.

July 1, 2021

The Environmental Working Group submits comments to the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) public meeting on June 17, 2021.

Submitted orally at the public meeting on June 17, 2021 and via email to nejac@epa.gov on July 1, 2021.

The Environmental Working Group is a national environmental health nonprofit with offices in Washington, D.C., Minnesota and California.

EWG has been researching drinking water contaminants and advocating for better drinking water quality in the U.S for decades. Today, we wanted to voice our support for the council and emphasize a focus on the intersection of environmental justice and drinking water quality that is a concern in communities across the country.

Everyone should have access to affordable and safe drinking water in the U.S., regardless of the community where they live. But drinking water contamination and barriers to accessibility are exacerbated in rural areas, lower income localities, and communities of color. There is a vast gap, even for most regulated contaminants, between what is legally allowed in drinking water and what is protective of sensitive populations, such as pregnant women and children.

The most immediate solution for any family is to invest in a home water filter, but this is simply a Band-Aid on a bigger problem. Relying on home filtration to solve water quality issues increases the disparity among affected communities, where those who cannot afford home filters end up with drinking water that is a lower quality than that of the people who can. Safe water has become a privilege when it should be a right.

EWG's mission is to empower consumers to take civic action, but how do you apply pressure to the companies and organizations responsible for polluting of our drinking water?

For food, you can buy organic.

For personal care products, you can choose clean beauty.

What do we do about tap water?

Communal and national solutions are needed to improve water quality equitably across the U.S.

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EWG wants to voice its support for these focused work groups, especially NEJAC's work to identify barriers to environmental equity. EWG urges the council to continue considering equity in access to resources in its guidance to the EPA. This will ensure that the communities most in need receive the support they require to decrease the disparities in drinking water quality that exist among and within communities across the U.S. We recognize the council's important work on ongoing initiatives that are striving to achieve these goals.

Submitted on behalf of Environmental Working Group,

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