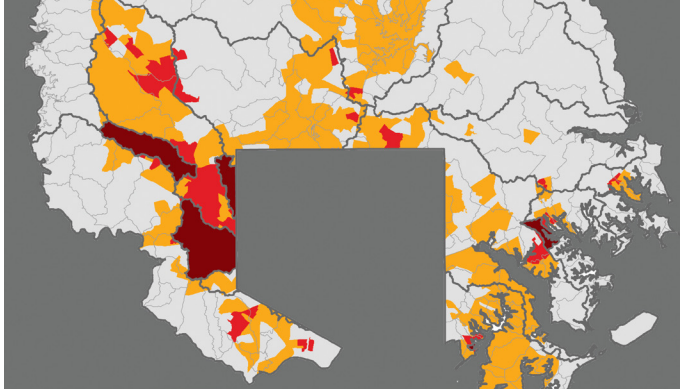


Mapping Environmental Justice & Water Quality in Baltimore County

Baltimore County, Maryland



Results of the mapping study show highest environmental justice risk (dark red) in five subwatersheds

In crafting and signing the Baltimore Watershed Agreement, the Baltimore City and County solidified their joint commitment to improve water quality in their shared watersheds. Soon afterwards, Biohabitats helped both entities to develop a Phase I Action Plan to begin working toward this goal. Because environmental justice (EJ) emerged as a critical, cross-cutting theme for all proposed watershed planning and water quality related actions, the resulting, final Action Plan requires the County and City

to jointly “ensure environmental justice indicators are taken into consideration during major planning efforts.”

To address this requirement, Biohabitats prepared a white paper on EJ indicators and assessment methods, interviewed local experts, and reviewed peer programs to evaluate linkages between EJ and clean water at the community, state, and local government levels. Very few sources explicitly use a defined set of indicators to track EJ in the context of watershed planning

A first of its kind assessment model empowers a municipality to explicitly examine the relationship between water quality and watershed planning, and environmental justice communities.

and water quality, so it became clear that there was a need to further explore and develop a set of indicators that could. Drawing from the initial research on EJ indicators and assessment methods, Biohabitats created an assessment methodology that would integrate EJ principles into watershed planning. The methodology uses GIS software to layer relevant EJ and watershed health indicator data including demographic characteristics, human health indicators and watershed health indicators.

Initial results of the assessment model developed for Baltimore County highlighted several subwatersheds where communities are at risk for EJ issues associated with water quality, based on the indicator model for EJ and water quality. The resulting maps and

associated report are informing the County’s small watershed action plans (SWAPs), as well as other watershed planning efforts, to prioritize projects in neighborhoods with environmental injustice and poor water quality.

Working with Baltimore County Biohabitats developed a mapping assessment protocol for identifying watershed planning opportunities in EJ communities.

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