

WELCOME!

Welcome to the latest e-newsletter of the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). We're sharing helpful information on OEJ work and policies, important DEP news, government resources, educational opportunities, best practices from community partners, and new developments on issues that may affect EJ communities.

Know someone who'd benefit from this information? Please share and [invite them to subscribe](#). Please help us spread the word! And we want to hear your thoughts on stories/topics you'd like to see.

TOP STORIES

Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence Accepting Applications!

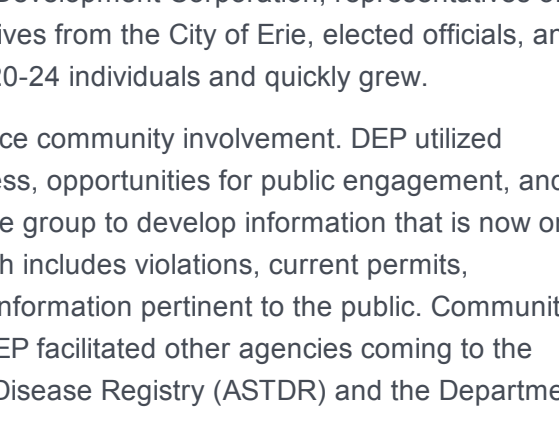
The Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence is open to any Pennsylvania business, farm, government agency, educational institution, non-profit organization or individual that has created, or participated in, the development of a project that promotes environmental stewardship in Pennsylvania. Directions on how to apply and helpful tips can be found on the [Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence page](#). Applications can be submitted to DEP from October 15, 2019 through December 17, 2019 through the [Award Nomination Website](#).



Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence

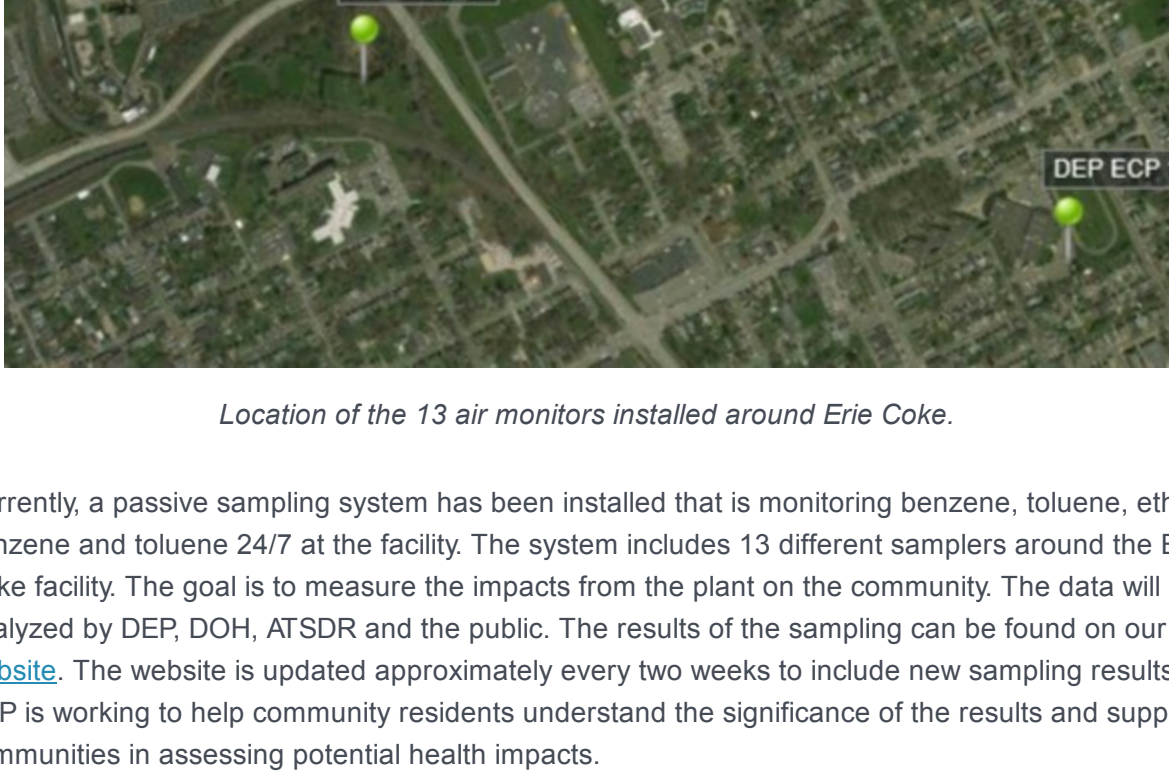
Community Involvement Inspires Erie Monitoring System

In Erie, OEJ and DEP staff have been working to advance citizen participation and involvement that sparked local air monitoring support. OEJ began discussing environmental justice (EJ) issues regarding Erie Coke in June of 2016 with EJAB member and Urban Erie CDC Executive Director Gary Horton and other stakeholders. In August of 2017, DEP received a Title V permit renewal application from Erie Coke. The renewal application sparked enhanced public participation around the permit application and Erie Coke operations. Because of the feedback from the community on Erie Coke's application, DEP began to facilitate the development of a stakeholder group interested and engaged in environmental issues in Erie, specifically Erie Coke. The group, included Gary Horton of the Urban Erie Community Development Corporation, representatives of the Benedictine Sisters, the Sierra Club, representatives from the City of Erie, elected officials, and others. The group first met in October of 2017 with 20-24 individuals and quickly grew.



Closeup of a passive air monitor installed around Erie Coke.

DEP has utilized several engagement tools to advance community involvement. DEP utilized stakeholder meetings to explain the permitting process, opportunities for public engagement, and other work under DEP. DEP staff also worked with the group to develop information that is now on a [community information page](#) on DEP's website, which includes violations, current permits, emissions reports, summary documents, and other information pertinent to the public. Community members also expressed concern over health, so DEP facilitated other agencies coming to the table including the Agency for Substance and Toxic Disease Registry (ASTDR) and the Department of Health (DOH) to discuss specific health concerns.



Location of the 13 air monitors installed around Erie Coke.

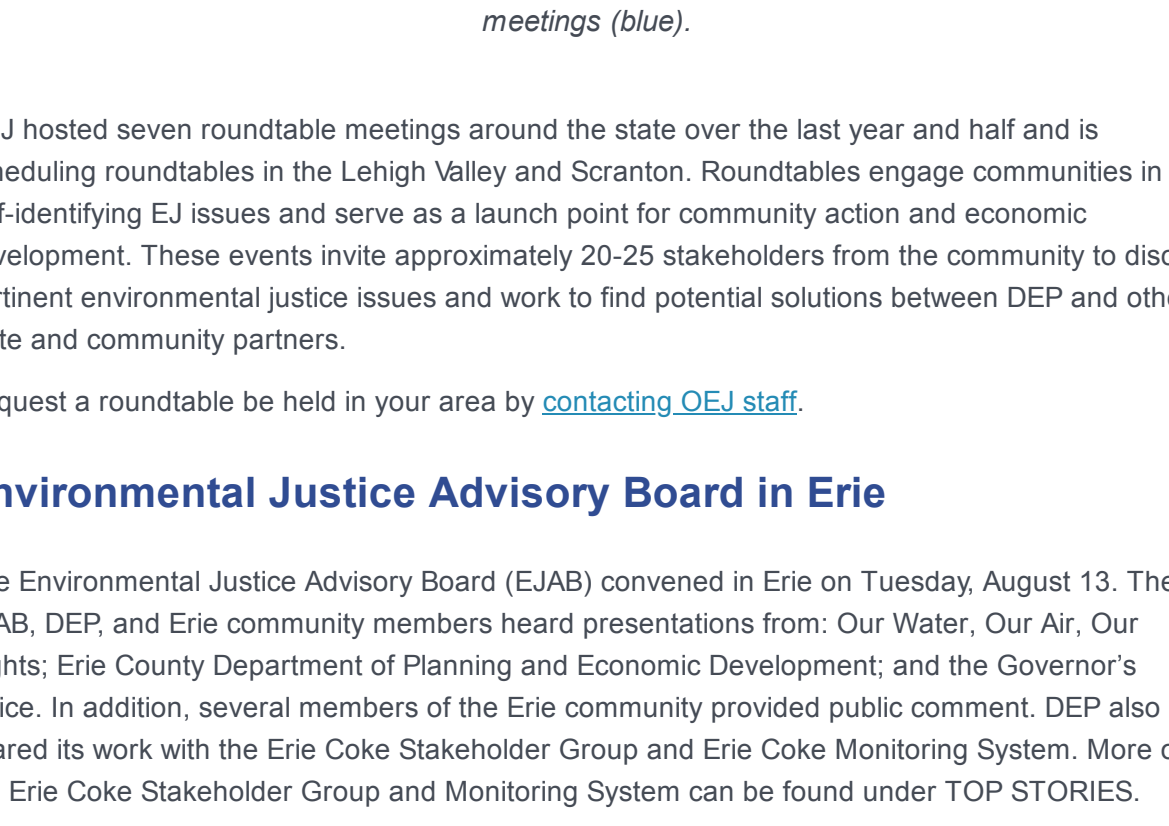
Currently, a passive sampling system has been installed that is monitoring benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene and toluene 24/7 at the facility. The system includes 13 different samplers around the Erie Coke facility. The goal is to measure the impacts from the plant on the community. The data will be analyzed by DEP, DOH, ATSDR and the public. The results of the sampling can be found on our [website](#). The website is updated approximately every two weeks to include new sampling results. DEP is working to help community residents understand the significance of the results and support communities in assessing potential health impacts.

A key lesson learned and reinforced is that it is valuable for DEP to interact early and often with the local community. DEP's formation of a stakeholder group started as a forum for expressing public concerns and led to an ongoing dialogue. The ongoing dialogue led to many outcomes that were unexpected back in 2017. OEJ is working to replicate stakeholder groups across the Commonwealth so other communities can share their environmental issues.

Learn more about Erie Coke: dep.pa.gov/eriecoke

AROUND THE STATE

Roundtables Advance Community and Economic Development



Locations where DEP has held roundtable meetings (red) and will be holding roundtable meetings (blue).

OEJ hosted seven roundtable meetings around the state over the last year and half and is scheduling roundtables in the Lehigh Valley and Scranton. Roundtables engage communities in self-identifying EJ issues and serve as a launch point for community action and economic development. These events invite approximately 20-25 stakeholders from the community to discuss pertinent environmental justice issues and work to find potential solutions between DEP and other state and community partners.

Request a roundtable be held in your area by [contacting OEJ staff](#).

Environmental Justice Advisory Board in Erie

The Environmental Justice Advisory Board (EJAB) convened in Erie on Tuesday, August 13. The EJAB, DEP, and Erie community members heard presentations from: Our Water, Our Air, Our Rights; Erie County Department of Planning and Economic Development; and the Governor's Office. In addition, several members of the Erie community provided public comment. DEP also shared its work with the Erie Coke Stakeholder Group and Erie Coke Monitoring System. More on the Erie Coke Stakeholder Group and Monitoring System can be found under TOP STORIES.

EJ IN PA

Seeds of Change

Rafiqqa Muhammad is a lifelong resident of Harrisburg, PA and has been a central figure in the community for years. Rafiqqa is the co-founder and artistic director of Ngozi Inc., a non-profit organization she founded 34 years ago that provides academic, physical, and cultural education and experiences to communities of color.

"The goal is to educate youth and their families about sustainable systems and how to live a more holistic life style," said Rafiqqa. With that vision, Ngozi Inc. has mobilized the Harrisburg community through its Let's Get Dirty! program. Let's Get Dirty! has implemented urban gardens, water catchment systems, and recycling programs at Harrisburg School District, City of Harrisburg Parks & Recreation Department, City of Harrisburg Public Works Department, The Boys & Girls Club of Harrisburg, Camp Curtin YMCA, and others.

Let's Get Dirty! has successfully certified 26 individuals in permaculture design in Dauphin, Cumberland, and Lancaster counties. Ngozi Inc., continues to focus on urban agriculture, cultural outreach and non-profit strategic planning to plant seeds of growth and environmental literacy throughout Harrisburg and disadvantaged communities.

Is there an EJ champion in your community? Does your community have a success story you would like to share? [Email us your story](#) for publication in the next Your Environment, Your Voice newsletter!

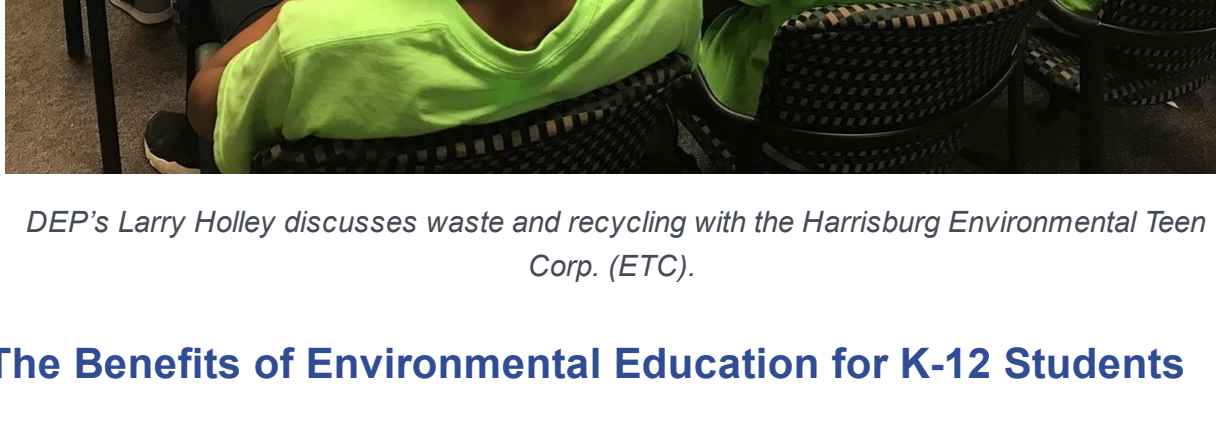


Planting vegetables in a raised garden bed at Camp Curtin YMCA in Harrisburg, PA. Photo credit: Ngozi Inc.



Painting rain barrels for a raincatchment system with Chesapeake Bay Foundation at Camp Curtin YMCA in Harrisburg, PA. Photo credit: Ngozi Inc.

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH



DEP's Larry Holley discusses waste and recycling with the Harrisburg Environmental Teen Corp. (ETC).

The Benefits of Environmental Education for K-12 Students

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) reported on a fascinating study conducted by researchers at Stanford University. The researchers reviewed 119 peer-reviewed studies completed over the past 20 years on the impacts of environmental education on K-12 students. The findings revealed that environmental education provides many benefits beyond just environmental knowledge. The studies reviewed found a multitude of benefits from environmental education including improved academic performance, enhanced critical thinking skills, increased civic engagement, positive environmental behaviors, developed personal growth and life-building skills including confidence, autonomy, and leadership. The review suggests that the hands-on aspect and versatility in environmental education can be tailored to various learning styles and can increase classroom participation. From the study, Dr. Nicole Ardoin of Stanford University said, "There is no doubt that environmental education is one of the most effective ways to instill a passion for learning among students." [Learn more](#) about the study and the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE).

OEJ is working with DEP's [Environmental Education and Information Center \(EEIC\)](#) and Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to bring environmental education programming to EJ Areas.

RESOURCES – TOO GOOD NOT TO SHARE

Commonwealth Grants, Loans, Rebates

- [Small Business Advantage Grants](#)
- [Pollution Prevention Assistance Account Loans](#)
- [Alternative Fuels Incentive Grants](#)
- [Alternative Fuel Vehicle Rebates](#)
- [Industrial Sites Reuse Program Grants and Loans](#)
- [Driving PA Forward Grants and Rebates](#)
- [Environmental Education Grants](#)
- [Recycling and Waste Grants for Local Governments](#)
- [Coastal Zone Grants](#)
- [Governor's Initiative for a Lead-Free Pennsylvania](#)

Other Resources

- [EPA People, Prosperity and the Planet \(P3\) Student Design Competition](#)
- [Sun Club Grants](#)
- [PECO Green Region Grants](#)

EJ Training Webinar Series

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched a webinar series to build the capacity of environmental justice for state agencies. EPA recorded all webinars in the 2019 State EJ Training Webinar Series and has made them available on their [webpage](#).

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

DEP Events

11/18 – [Webinar to assist applicants in submitting their Environmental Education grant application](#)
 11/19 – [Joint Environmental Justice Advisory Board \(EJAB\) and Citizens Advisory Council \(CAC\) meeting](#)

[Check out DEP's Calendar of Events for more events](#)

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

OEJ welcomes your suggestions or inquiries about our work, programs and/or policies. Please contact us at RA-EPOEJ@pa.gov, or directly:

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Western Region
 Coming Soon!

