

The Cumulative Impacts Law

What is the Cumulative Impacts Law?

The Cumulative Impacts Law is a law that addresses the concentration of polluting facilities in low-income communities and communities with more Black, Indigenous, and people of color. This history of systemic injustice has led to certain communities bearing the brunt of pollution, leading to increased health, environmental, economic, and social inequities. This inequity must be stopped.

In order to address these issues, we must stop large sources of pollution from being sited in overburdened communities.

What are cumulative impacts?

When multiple sources of pollution and other destabilizing factors are in the same place, the added pollution of each facility leads to more negative impacts on the health and environment of the community. Polluters have treated certain communities as "sacrifice zones" for decades, purposefully polluting those communities instead of others. This has created and contributed to a number of disparities in health, environment, quality of life, and economic stability.

What does the Cumulative Impacts Law do?

- Defines "environmental justice areas" based on factors like income, race, and tribal status.
- Adds regulatory protections to environmental justice areas in the seven county metro area, Duluth, and Rochester, with the ability for tribes in Minnesota to opt into the policy.*
- Requires permit applicants seeking larger air permits to evaluate the cumulative impacts of their facility if they meet certain benchmarks*. This includes new permits, any major expansions of permits, and the reissuance of permits.
- Requires the commissioner to deny permits for facilities that are causing or contributing to a substantial adverse impact* to the health or environment of an environmental justice area, unless a community benefit agreement is developed*.
- Creates more transparency in the regulatory process by creating a public database of cumulative impact analyses and requiring multiple public meetings for facilities that conduct a cumulative impacts analysis.
- Gives more power to environmental justice communities to reject permits for unwanted facilities, and allow permits for desired facilities.

* *To be determined in rulemaking.*

How might this affect you?

If you live in an environmental justice area, this bill will give you significantly better protections against both new polluting facilities and current facilities in your community. You will also be able to see what kind of projects are being proposed in your community, and have a real say in whether or not those projects go forward.

Frontline Communities
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