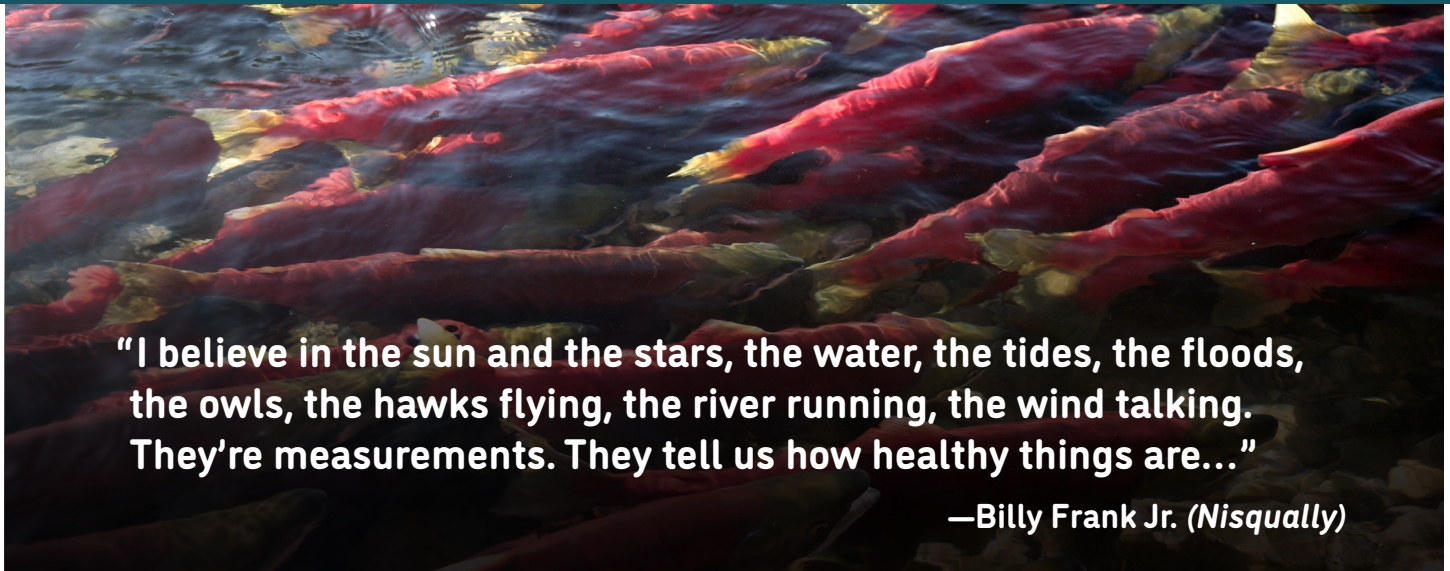


# Washington Tracking Network and Tribes:

## *Pathways to Improve the Environmental Health Disparities Map*



**“I believe in the sun and the stars, the water, the tides, the floods, the owls, the hawks flying, the river running, the wind talking. They’re measurements. They tell us how healthy things are...”**

**—Billy Frank Jr. (Nisqually)**

### **Brief Background**

The Washington Tracking Network’s (WTN) [Environmental Health Disparities \(EHD\) map](#) is an interactive tool that shows the cumulative impacts of 19 health and environmental indicators at the census tract level. The map was developed through a partnership between community organizations, the Department of Health (DOH), and academia. Updates are made via Tribal and community engagement and science, in alignment with staffing and data availability.

After the map’s release in 2019, several environmental justice focused state laws referenced the EHD map as a tool for state agencies to identify overburdened communities. The term “overburdened communities” describes communities who are experiencing more impacts from environmental and social issues.

“Overburdened” may not be how communities identify their experience; we use this term because it is the term used within the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) and Climate Commitment Acts (CCA).

All census tracts with Tribal designated lands, as defined by federal law 18 U.S.C. Sec. 1151, are classified as overburdened communities or highly impacted and should be prioritized accordingly.

The HEAL Act made several changes to how the EHD map is developed and maintained. It gave DOH the responsibility to update and maintain the EHD map. The HEAL Act also requires DOH to offer formal Tribal consultation and collaboration on updates to the map, which began in Spring of 2023.

The HEAL Act references the EHD map as a tool state agencies could use to help allocate funding and resources. Through HEAL, seven state agencies are required to allocate a minimum of 35 percent of expenditures to overburdened communities, with the goal of increasing to 40 percent.

### **Working with Tribes and community to make the map better**

**WTN invites Tribal partners to continue collaborating to improve the map by better reflecting Tribal priorities, values, and concerns.**

WTN is committed to supporting Tribal data sovereignty and following through on the commitments we make through Tribal consultation to update and maintain the EHD map. We accept feedback at any point and anticipate holding listening sessions and roundtables beginning in 2025 and completing a comprehensive review in 2025, as required by HEAL. As a result of our consultation and collaboration, so far we are:

- Adding additional Tribal and community focused engagement staff to facilitate collaborations.

- Investigating how Tribal data is currently represented in the 19 health and environmental indicators. This will help to identify opportunities to incorporate Tribal data where appropriate.
- Taking a collaborative approach to ensure Tribal perspectives and values are incorporated before we develop new indicators. We are following the DOH Tribal Collaboration and Consultation process and Tribal HEAL guidance.
- Clarifying our guidance for state agencies on how to use the EHD map, so that it is clear that Tribal lands must be included as overburdened communities.

## Planned and Potential Updates

Tribal collaboration and community engagement has led to a list of topics that we are working on so that the map better reflects Environmental Justice. We understand that many of the topics mentioned below are culturally sensitive and require ongoing relationship building, increased communications, and continued support for data sovereignty. Version 3.0 of the EHD map is scheduled to be released in 2025. We are preparing to add eight new indicators to the EHD rankings, for a total of 27 indicators and more than 30 overlays, which are features that can be turned on.

We are open to discussion about any concerns or suggestions you have about both published and unpublished topics. Some of the indicators that we are currently working on have come from Tribal and community input. This is vital for making the map better.

### Topics that we are preparing to add or update in version 3.0

- Air quality-related respiratory disease
- Digital infrastructure
- Food access
- Health care access
- Lead risk from housing (update)
- Low birth weight (update)
- Pesticide exposure
- Population with disability
- Proximity to hazardous waste sites (update)
- Proximity to Superfund sites (update)
- Tribal health services locations (overlay)
- Waste water discharge (update)
- Water quality
- Wildfire smoke exposure

### Topics needing additional development and consideration:

- Climate change
- First foods
- Water topics
- Noise
- Air traffic pollution

## Feedback, collaboration, and consultation

We are happy to hear from you to learn how the map could serve you better. If you have questions, concerns, want to offer input, or are interested in participating in a working group on how to improve the EHD map, please let us know. We anticipate holding listening sessions, attending Tribal forums, and roundtables over several seasons culminating in Tribal consultation if requested while continuing to make updates and build relationships. We are also increasing engagement with community and overall seeking increased representation from the communities that are leading on Environmental and Climate Justice.

We are available to consult with you on how to use the map or participate in feedback. The new [HEAL Act capacity grant program](#) is administered by DOH can be used as a funding source for Tribal staff's time to engage with us on this work.

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