



OFFICE OF EXTERNAL CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

February 23, 2024

In Reply Refer to:

EPA Complaint No: 01RNO-21-R5

John J. Kim
Director
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
1021 North Grand Ave. East
P.O. Box 19276
Springfield, IL 62794-9276
John.j.kim@illinois.gov

Re: Resolution of EPA Complaint No. 01RNO-21-R5

Dear Director Kim:

This letter is to notify you that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA"), Office of Environmental Justice & External Civil Rights ("OEJECR"), Office of External Civil Rights Compliance ("OECRC"), has resolved EPA Complaint No. 01RNO-21-R5 based on the enclosed Informal Resolution Agreement ("Agreement"), which is entered into between EPA and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency ("IL EPA").

On January 25, 2021, EPA accepted for investigation a complaint filed on behalf of the Southeast Environmental Task Force ("SETF") and the Chicago Southeast Coalition to Ban Petcoke ("Coalition") against IL EPA alleging discrimination on the basis of race and national origin in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("Title VI") and EPA's nondiscrimination regulation, at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7. Specifically, EPA accepted for investigation the following issues:

1. Whether IL EPA discriminated against the predominantly Latino and African American community in southeast Chicago on the basis of race and national origin in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and EPA's nondiscrimination regulation found at 40 C.F.R. Part 7, in its permitting process and issuance of a Construction Permit to General III, LLC.
2. Whether IL EPA has and is implementing the procedural safeguards required under 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7 that all recipients of federal assistance must have in place to comply with their general nondiscrimination obligations, including specific policies and procedures to ensure meaningful access to the IL EPA's services, programs, and activities, for individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with

disabilities, and whether the IL EPA has a public participation policy and process that is consistent with Title VI and the other federal civil rights laws, and EPA's implementing regulation at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7.

During the course of EPA's investigation, IL EPA agreed to enter into the IRA process in order to resolve EPA Complaint No. 01RNO-21-R5. The enclosed Agreement, signed on February 14, 2024, is entered into by EPA pursuant to the authority granted to EPA under the federal nondiscrimination laws, including Title VI and 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7. It is understood that the Agreement does not constitute an admission by IL EPA of any violation or a finding by EPA of compliance or noncompliance with applicable federal non-discrimination laws and regulation.

The enclosed Agreement does not affect IL EPA's continuing responsibility under Title VI, 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, and other federal nondiscrimination laws, nor does it affect OECRC's investigation of any Title VI or other federal civil rights complaints or address any other matter not covered by this Agreement. This letter sets forth EPA's disposition of the complaint. This letter is not a formal statement of EPA policy and should not be relied upon, cited, or construed as such.

We thank IL EPA for its willingness to work collaboratively with EPA to develop this IRA in the interest of ensuring that all people in the state of Illinois have access to clean air without regard to race, color, or national origin. We appreciate IL EPA's commitment to implement enhancements to its air-related permitting process to assure nondiscrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and to promote transparency and public engagement in this process. EPA is committed to working with IL EPA as it implements the provisions of the Agreement.

In addition, we appreciate the Complainants' efforts in raising these important issues. We thank Complainants for their cooperation and responsiveness to EPA's outreach during this informal resolution process.

If you have any questions regarding this letter and the Agreement between EPA and IL EPA, please contact me at (202) 809-3297 or by e-mail at hoang.anhthu@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

**ANHTHU
HOANG**

Digitally signed by
ANHTHU HOANG
Date: 2024.02.22
16:37:33 -05'00'

Anhthu Hoang, Acting Director
Office of External Civil Rights Compliance
Office of Environmental Justice and External
Civil Rights

Enclosure

cc: Ariadne Goerke
Deputy Associate General Counsel
Civil Rights & Finance Law Office
U.S. EPA Office of General Counsel

Cheryl Newton
Deputy Regional Administrator
Deputy Civil Rights Official
U.S. EPA Region 5

Robert Kaplan
Regional Counsel
U.S. EPA Region 5



OFFICE OF EXTERNAL CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

INFORMAL RESOLUTION AGREEMENT

between

THE ILLINOIS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (IL EPA)

and

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

EPA COMPLAINT NO. 01RNO-21- R5

I. PURPOSE AND JURISDICTION

- A. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d to 2000d-7 (“Title VI”) and other federal nondiscrimination laws, and United States Environmental Protection Agency’s (“EPA”) implementing regulation at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7 prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, sex, age, and retaliation in the programs, services and activities of applicants for or recipients of federal financial assistance.¹
- B. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (“IL EPA”) receives federal financial assistance from the EPA. As a term and condition, IL EPA agreed to comply with federal nondiscrimination laws, including Title VI, and all applicable civil rights regulations.² IL EPA also provided assurance that it would “fully comply with all applicable civil rights statutes and EPA regulations.”³ Therefore, IL EPA must assure nondiscrimination in programs and activities pursuant to the provisions of Title VI, the other federal non-discrimination laws, and the EPA’s implementing regulation.

¹ Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 United States Code §§ 2000d to 2000d-7 (Title VI); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 794; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 et seq.; Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 U.S.C. §§ 6101 et seq.; Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, Pub. L. 92-500 § 13, 86 Stat. 903 (codified as amended at 33 U.S.C. § 1251 (1972)); 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7.

² See Term and Condition 36, Civil Rights Obligations at https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-09/documents/fy_2020_epa_general_terms_and_conditions_effective_october_1_2019.pdf.

³ See Preaward Compliance Review Report for All Applicants and Recipients Requesting EPA Financial Assistance.

- C. On December 17, 2020, the EPA’s Office of External Civil Rights Compliance (“OECRC”)⁴ received Complaint No. 01RNO-21-R5 (“Complaint”), which alleged discrimination by IL EPA based on race and national origin.
- D. In response to the complaint, on January 25, 2021, the EPA accepted for investigation the following issues:
 - 1. Whether IL EPA discriminated against the predominantly Latino and African American community in southeast Chicago on the basis of race and national origin in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and EPA’s nondiscrimination regulation found at 40 C.F.R. Part 7, in its permitting process and issuance of a Construction Permit to General III, LLC.
 - 2. Whether IL EPA has and is implementing the procedural safeguards required under 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7 that all recipients of federal assistance must have in place to comply with their general nondiscrimination obligations, including specific policies and procedures to ensure meaningful access to the IL EPA’s services, programs, and activities, for individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities, and whether the IL EPA has a public participation policy and process that is consistent with Title VI and the other federal civil rights laws, and EPA’s implementing regulation at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7.
- E. During the course of the EPA’s investigation of Complaint No. 01RNO-21-R5, on February 11, 2021, IL EPA agreed to engage in the voluntary Informal Resolution Agreement (“Agreement”) process in order to resolve the Complaint.
- F. This Agreement is entered into by IL EPA and the EPA.
- G. This Agreement is entered into pursuant to the authority granted to the EPA under the federal non-discrimination laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the EPA’s implementing regulation found at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, and resolves Complaint No. 01RNO-21-R5.

⁴ On September 24, 2022, EPA announced the establishment of the Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights (OEJECR). The new Office includes the External Civil Rights Compliance Office, which was renamed the Office of External Civil Rights Compliance (OECRC). OECRC continues to enforce and ensure compliance with federal civil rights laws, which prohibit discrimination by applicants for and recipients of EPA financial assistance. OECRC accomplishes these goals in accordance with the procedure described in the Case Resolution Manual.

- H. This Agreement does not constitute an admission by IL EPA of a violation of, or a finding of compliance or noncompliance by the EPA with, Title VI or 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7.
- I. IL EPA has acknowledged its responsibilities in carrying out its programs in a nondiscriminatory manner, in accordance with the requirements of Title VI and other federal non-discrimination laws and the EPA regulation at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7. For purposes of this Agreement, the responsibilities addressed by the IL EPA in accordance with Title VI and EPA's implementing regulations shall hereinafter be referred to as affecting or pertaining to "civil rights." The commitments detailed in Sections IV and V of this Agreement, which IL EPA has voluntarily agreed to undertake and implement, are in furtherance of these ongoing responsibilities.
- J. Nothing in this Agreement contemplates that the terms or commitments applying to the IL EPA expressed herein shall constitute a "rule" for purposes of the Illinois Administrative Procedure Act, 5 ILCS 100/¶1-1 - ¶15-10.

II. **BACKGROUND**

- A. General III, LLC, ("General III") submitted a construction permit application ("App. No. 19090021") to the IL EPA that was received on September 25, 2019, seeking a new scrap metal recycling facility at 11600 South Burley Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. The project contemplated the relocation of an existing facility formerly owned by General Iron Industries, Inc., in the Lincoln Park area of Chicago to a site operated by South Chicago Property Management, Ltd., an affiliate of the Reserve Management Group.⁵
- B. Following several waivers of the permit decision deadline, as well as issuance of an Environmental Justice ("EJ") notification, notices of public comment and a public hearing for a draft permit, deliberative sessions with EPA/Region V staff regarding modeling and draft permit, and preparation of a responsiveness document to address a large compilation of public comments, the IL EPA issued a final construction permit to General III on June 25, 2020.
- C. On August 20, 2020, the IL EPA received a formal Grievance on App. No. 19090021 from environmental advocacy groups, Southeast Environmental Task Force ("SETF"), Natural Resources Defense Council and the Chicago Southeast Coalition to Ban

⁵ See, Construction Permit Application for Scrap Metal Recycling Facility, dated September 24, 2019, submitted by RK & Associates, Inc., on behalf of General III, LLC, at Section 1.0, page 1.

Petcoke (“Coalition”), that was filed under procedures implemented in accordance with the IL EPA’s EJ policy and EJ Grievance Procedures.⁶

- D. The Grievance alleged that several aspects of the IL EPA’s review of the permit application and issuance of the construction permit for General III resulted in discrimination on the basis of race or national origin in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003 at *740 ILCS 23*, as well as violated the requirements of IL EPA’s EJ policy. The IL EPA rejected the alleged claims of discrimination in a formal response to the Grievance on December 18, 2020.

III. IL EPA’S EXISTING PERMIT REVIEW PROCESS

- A. As part of informal resolution discussions between OECRC and the IL EPA in this matter, a general process of permit review was identified by the IL EPA to describe the various stages of permit review and methods of administering Illinois’ air-related permitting process for certain air construction permit applications as identified in this Agreement. This process is included here to promote transparency and to illustrate those areas of the process that the IL EPA aims to improve through the implementation of its future commitments in light of Title VI requirements and EPA’s implementing regulations.
- B. IL EPA currently evaluates its obligations with Title VI and EPA’s implementing regulations in conjunction with administering permitting programs.
- C. The permitting process for emission sources in Illinois involves construction and operating permit applications for major and minor sources of emissions. The permit review process described in Section III (D) below applies only to the following air construction permit applications for projects that are located in an area of EJ concern as determined by IL EPA:
 - 1. A construction permit for a new source that is to be located in an area of EJ concern and that will require a Clean Air Act Permit Program (“CAAPP”) (codified at 415 ILCS 5/39.5) permit or a Federally Enforceable State Operating Permit (“FESOP”) (codified at 415 ILCS 5/39(a)) permit;
 - 2. A construction permit for any existing source that is located in an area of EJ concern, that possesses a CAAPP permit or FESOP and that seeks an increase in annual permitted emissions; or

⁶ The IL EPA’s EJ Grievance Procedures serve as administrative procedures required under EPA regulations found at 40 C.F.R. §7.90.

3. A construction permit for any existing source that is located in an area of EJ concern, that seeks an increase in annual permitted emissions and that will require a new CAAPP permit or new FESOP permit for the first time.

D. The Bureau of Air's permit review process currently consists of the following:

1. A construction permit application submitted to the IL EPA is subject to a 90-day decision deadline unless notice of comment and opportunity for public hearing are required by applicable law or regulation. If notice of comment and opportunity for public hearing is required, the decision deadline is 180 days. The Bureau of Air's Permit Section monitors the decision deadline during the review process, requesting waivers from the applicant, as needed, to avoid issuance of a permit by default.
2. An initial evaluation of the application is undertaken to determine whether the source location falls within an area of EJ concern. This evaluation utilizes the EJ Start GIS program originally created to help guide the implementation of the IL EPA's Policy, along with additional screening that uses the environmental, health, and demographic indicators in EPA's EJ Screen to identify which permitting projects may need additional scrutiny.
3. If EJ Start reveals that the project addressed in the application is for a location within an area of EJ concern, a "review request" is submitted to the EJ Tracking System. The EJ Coordinator and staff review the request, using information concerning the type of facility, the nature of the permit action, previous interest in the source and other factors to determine whether an EJ notification is appropriate.
4. If determined appropriate, an EJ notification letter is prepared containing details of the application and a short summary of the project. The notice is sent to elected officials (federal, state and local), community groups and individuals who have requested to be notified, to inform them of the pending application for permit.
 - (a) An EJ notification letter is typically sent out conventional mail or electronically within 14 days of receipt of an application.
 - (b) Any follow-up inquiries or comments to the EJ notification letter are used by the IL EPA EJ Coordinator and the IL EPA Office of Community Relations ("OCR") to inform future public outreach needs during the review of the permit application.

5. Environmental and demographic screening information is accessed by IL EPA's OCR and IL EPA's EJ Coordinator to aid in the above evaluation. The screening information is also distributed to the Permit Section to assist in the evaluation of the permit application.

6. As part of the initial review of the permit application, an evaluation of the emissions of the proposed application is made by the Bureau of Air's Permit Section in consultation with the permit applicant. This evaluation focuses on whether emission increases from the project can be reduced or voluntarily limited by the source to avoid or minimize potential impacts to an affected EJ community.
 - (a) The Bureau of Air's Permit Section evaluates proposed emissions increases and decreases associated with the source, as well as permit allowable limits from an existing source permit.

 - (b) If necessary to avoid or minimize project emissions, the Permit Section may encourage a source to accept reductions in permitted source limits, capture emission offsets that may be of qualitative significance or achieve emission reductions that go beyond compliance. These deliberations typically occur during the earliest stages of development of a draft construction permit.

7. The need for air quality modeling is evaluated by Bureau of Air Modeling Unit to confirm that the project will not threaten or compromise existing National Ambient Air Quality Standards ("NAAQS") or other legal standards appropriate for comparison with other pollutants of concern.
 - (a) The staff of the Bureau of Air's Modeling Unit conducts outreach with the applicant to determine the proper scope of emissions modeling conducted by third-party consultant (or independently by the Modeling Unit) and identifies the standards to be used for comparison.

 - (b) The Modeling Unit may consult with EPA/Region V to address modeling issues of concern.

 - (c) Modeling results obtained from an applicant are audited by the Modeling Unit; issues raised from the audit review are addressed as needed. If the Modeling Unit conducts the modeling, the modeling results are shared or discussed with the applicant or its consultant.

- (d) A final air quality modeling memorandum is prepared by the Modeling Unit and forwarded to Permit Section. If a draft permit is subject to a public comment period and/or hearing, a copy of the memorandum will be posted to the IL EPA's public notice website at the time of public notice of the comment period and/or hearing.
8. The Permit Section evaluates appropriate permit enhancements to address potential impacts to an area of EJ concern. These enhancements frequently involve emissions monitoring, recordkeeping, reporting or testing requirements and can include, subject to either agreement by the applicant or agency enabling authority under existing law, the following types of permit conditions:
- (a) Improved monitoring systems, including parametric and continuous monitoring systems, that go beyond existing practices or rule requirements;
 - (b) Development of a fugitive dust operating program/plan (or enhancements to an existing program/plan);
 - (c) Consideration of operational requirements to establish limits on potential-to-emit or to demonstrate source compliance with an emission rate;
 - (d) Increased use or frequency of emissions testing;
 - (e) Development of enforceable requirements to go into the construction permit assuring that the facility meets certain modeling assumptions used in the air quality modeling (including hours of operation, operating requirements, operating schedule, meteorological assumptions, property boundaries, etc.);
 - (f) Development of an odor control plan, where appropriate, to identify and mitigate potential off-site odor impacts from the project;
 - (g) Development of odor monitoring of third-party complaints, including a process for tracking complaints and inspecting affected process operations known to be capable of causing air pollution;
 - (h) Discretionary use of prior adjudications of the Environmental Protection Act by the applicant that involved a release of a contaminant into the environment in evaluating the permit application;

- (i) Discretionary use of reasonable conditions specifically related to an applicant's past compliance history with the Environmental Protection Act and as necessary to correct, detect, or prevent noncompliance;
 - (j) Encourage the use of pollution prevention techniques; and/or
 - (k) Encourage applicant outreach, independent of the permit review process, with the affected community.
9. The Permit Section routinely shares drafts of the construction permit for comment with the applicant or its consultant as a draft permit takes shape. The Permit Section may also share a permit draft or consult with EPA/Region V officials regarding the draft construction permit.
10. Contemporaneous with the development of a draft permit and emissions modeling, the IL EPA's Office of Environmental Justice ("OEJ") and OCR engage in public outreach as may be warranted by the comments received from the EJ notification process. Among other things, this may include:
- (a) Preparing and distributing fact sheets, in consultation with Permit Section staff, that discuss aspects of the source, applicable regulations or the project;
 - (b) Arranging for local repositories that will contain the draft permit and notice, together with supporting documents, such as fact sheets, permit application materials or agency memoranda, that are available for public review. The same documents may also be posted to the IL EPA's public notice website.
 - (c) Conducting small group meetings in lieu of, or in addition to, a public hearing to discuss with the affected community their concerns about the project. These meetings can be appropriate where there has been no request for a public hearing or where criteria for holding a public hearing is not otherwise met under the Bureau of Air's public participation rules codified at 35 Ill. Adm. Code Part 252. These meetings can also be scheduled in anticipation of a public comment period or hearing, with the purpose being to inform the public in how to effectively present hearing comments or submit written comments during the comment period;

- (d) Arranging bilingual or multi-lingual publication, in accordance with the IL EPA's Language Access Plan (LAP), of public notices or, as appropriate, other materials;
 - (e) Arranging bilingual or multi-lingual public hearings, in accordance with the IL EPA's LAP, where appropriate; and/or
 - (f) Preparing for a formal public hearing and comment period for the project, as needed, in accordance with applicable regulations.
11. The review of the project emissions data, initial EJ screening, emissions modeling, selection of permit enhancements and other steps described above typically culminates in the development of a draft permit. For projects affecting EJ areas of concern, this review process constitutes an "EJ analysis," though the latter term is not officially recognized currently by Illinois statute or regulation.
 12. The determination of whether an application for a construction permit is subject to notice and opportunity for a hearing is determined by the IL EPA's public participation rules codified at 35 Ill. Adm. Code Part 252.
 13. The IL EPA hearing officer conducts the hearing (typically in-person but can be virtual) and generally facilitates the presentation of comments and accepts exhibits at hearing. A hearing panel, including representatives from the Permit Section, provide a brief overview of the permit process and draft permit at the outset of the hearing.
 14. The hearing officer receives comments during the comment period and responds to any inquiries received during or after the close of public comment, including extension requests, as appropriate.
 15. After the close of the comment period, the Permit Section, together with other IL EPA staff, review public comments and prepare a Responsiveness Summary. The Permit Section may seek assistance from the applicant or its consultant in responding to public comments and/or in negotiating additional changes to the draft permit to address comments.
 16. The Permit Section makes a final permit decision and informs the applicant of the decision by mail. OCR sends a letter or an email to persons registered on a contact list informing them of the decision. If the decision is to issue a permit, a copy of the permit and Responsiveness Summary is posted to the IL

EPA's public notice website. If the decision is to deny the permit, a copy of the denial letter is posted.

IV. IL EPA COMMITMENTS TO ADDRESS CIVIL RIGHTS AND EJ IN PERMIT REVIEW PROCESS

- A. The IL EPA commits to implementing enhancements to its permit review process, as described in Section III above, as part of the resolution of this Complaint. These enhancements consist of the following:
1. IL EPA agrees to continue its implementation of the general permit review process outlined in Section III above, subject to changes in existing provisions of the Illinois Environmental Protection Act, the Pollution Control Board's air pollution regulations or the IL EPA's administrative regulations.
 2. IL EPA is revising its EJ notification letter template to provide additional information as it relates to informing the public of rights to public participation in the permit review process, including how an individual can request a public hearing on a permit application. IL EPA commits to using the new template during the permit review process referenced in Sections III and IV.
 3. When considering an application for an air construction permit as outlined in Section III (C), IL EPA will:
 - (a) Affirmatively consider prior adjudications with respect to the Illinois Environmental Protection Act; and
 - (b) Affirmatively consider whether to impose reasonable permit conditions specifically related to an applicant's past compliance history under the Environmental Protection Act to correct, detect or prevent noncompliance. This may include consideration of:
 - (i) Information contained within the IL EPA's environmental compliance tracking system;
 - (ii) Information submitted in public comments to a construction permit application pending review;
 - (iii) Judicial or administrative consent decrees or compliance orders that are entered into, or issued, by EPA involving requirements of the Illinois State Implementation Plan; and
 - (iv) Information relating to State-only compliance history.

4. When reviewing construction permit applications referenced in Section III (C) for possible enhancements to the draft permit, IL EPA may conduct further analysis, as needed, to inform its permit decision. Such analysis may include consideration of the following:
 - (a) Information relating to other sources permitted by IL EPA or EPA/Region V;
 - (b) Information relating to regulated sources under state or federal environmental laws, such as those subject to federal or state requirements for reporting of waste generation or emissions (e.g., Toxics Release Inventory reporters, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act hazardous waste generator sites);
 - (c) Data bearing upon appropriate factors identified as environmental, health or socioeconomic indicators in EJ Screen;
 - (d) Location of sensitive populations or places near the proposed facility, including:
 - (i) Schools;
 - (ii) Hospitals;
 - (iii) Day care centers (e.g., children, elders);
 - (iv) Culturally significant resources (e.g., cemeteries, churches);
 - (e) Factors that may increase community exposure or vulnerability as compared to other populations (e.g., cultural practices, subsistence fishing, hunting, foraging information); and
 - (f) Consultation with EPA or other state and federal regulatory authorities regarding additional areas of study.
5. If the IL EPA's analysis described above in Section III (D) and Section IV shows disproportionate and adverse effects, IL EPA will consider:
 - (a) Making additional refinements to the project emissions analysis, air quality modeling or permit enhancements addressed in Section III (D)(6), (7) and (8) respectively;
 - (b) Prioritizing compliance inspections and any resulting enforcement initiatives of an applicant's existing permitted source and/or other

contributing sources to the affected area, with the aim of reducing existing adverse impacts;

- (c) Prioritizing grant funding for projects in the affected community;
- (d) Conducting consultation with EPA/Region V or other state and federal agencies relating to potential mitigation options, including fence-line monitoring, risk assessments or rulemakings.

6. The IL EPA will provide a written analysis of its evaluation of compliance and enforcement history, as well as any additional civil rights analysis or mitigation measures undertaken in Section IV (A) (3), (4) and (5) above. The written analysis will be prepared prior to the notice of public comment and/or hearing concerning a draft construction permit and will be posted among the documents available on the agency's public notice website and/or public repository. The public notice will reference the written civil rights analysis. If no public participation is provided for by IL EPA's Part 252 regulations rule, the written analysis will be posted to the IL EPA's public notice webpage at the time of permit issuance.

B. Revised EJ notification letter template referenced in Section IV A (2) above

- 1. Within 120 days of the effective date of this Agreement, IL EPA will submit to EPA for review and approval the revised EJ notification letter template, referenced in Section IV A (2) above.
- 2. Within 60 days, EPA will share feedback on the revised EJ notification letter template and IL EPA will address EPA's feedback within 60 days.

C. Within 180 days of the date of this Agreement, IL EPA will provide confirmation to EPA that appropriate IL EPA permit review staff have been made aware of the requirements of this Agreement regarding the process described in Section IV.

V. IL EPA COMMITMENTS TO ADDRESS PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARD REQUIREMENTS

A. Notice of Non-Discrimination under Federal Non-Discrimination Laws

- 1. IL EPA has updated its Notice of Nondiscrimination to include the language requested by EPA.

- (a) IL EPA has posted a revised notice of non-discrimination (Notice) on IL EPA's website homepage and in all IL EPA's offices and facilities, and may also include or reference such notice in its general publications that are distributed to the public. IL EPA will ensure that its revised Notice, including as posted on its website homepage, is accessible to individuals with limited-English proficiency (LEP) and individuals with disabilities, including ensuring that the Notice as posted on its website homepage is accessible to persons who are blind or have low vision.
- (b) If the identity of the Non-Discrimination Coordinator changes, then IL EPA will promptly update materials as appropriate.

B. Grievance Procedures to Process Discrimination Complaints filed under the Federal Non-Discrimination Laws⁷

1. IL EPA has revised its Grievance Procedure to include additional commitments to ensure that IL EPA's Grievance Procedure will promptly, fairly, and appropriately address nondiscrimination complaints.
2. IL EPA will ensure that it has prominently published online, and make available in print, its revised grievance procedures to process discrimination complaints filed under federal non-discrimination statutes and the EPA's implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7. IL EPA will review the grievance procedures on an annual basis, and revise as necessary, to allow for prompt and fair resolution of discrimination complaints. IL EPA will also post revised grievance procedures in English and all appropriate languages on its website.
3. IL EPA will develop training for identifying how complaints filed under the Grievance Procedures will be investigated and processed by the investigatory staff and the decision-maker(s). IL EPA will submit a copy of the training materials to EPA within 30 days of the effective date of this Agreement. EPA may provide comments to IL EPA within 30 days of receipt.
4. IL EPA's Non-Discrimination Coordinator will record the disposition of each nondiscrimination complaint pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 7.85(a)(3), post decisions on IL EPA's website, and maintain these records pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 7.85(e) for a period of at least three years.

⁷ 40 C.F.R. § 7.90; 40 C.F.R. § 5.135(b).

C. **Enhanced Public Participation Plan**

1. IL EPA will revise its Enhanced Public Participation Plan to include the additional commitments outlined below and to ensure that IL EPA's public involvement process will be available to all persons regardless of race, color, national origin (including limited-English proficiency), age, disability, sex, or prior exercise of rights or opposition to actions prohibited under federal non-discrimination laws.
2. The revised Enhanced Public Participation Plan will:
 - (a) Ensure that the factors used to determine the time, place, location, duration, and security at public hearings and meetings are applied in a non-discriminatory manner.
 - (b) Ensure that public comments can be submitted to IL EPA (1) in writing, via conventional mail or electronically, during the public comment period and (2) orally at hearings, provided that both avenues for expression may be subject to reasonable deadlines established by the agency taking into account the nature of the hearings and their relationship to the agency's decision-making process.
 - (c) Ensure that its public outreach efforts are accessible to all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, limited English proficiency, disability, sex and age by:
 - (i) providing a process for identifying communities to be impacted by a particular IL EPA decision-making process;
 - (ii) requiring the posting of contact information for relevant staff members on its website, including phone numbers and email addresses, to allow the public to communicate with appropriate staff;
 - (iii) identifying a place to maintain records, consistent with the Illinois record retention laws, regarding past and present community concerns (including any complaints filed under the federal non-discrimination laws);
 - (iv) providing a mechanism for IL EPA's community partners to provide input into determinations of how to distribute project-specific notices (including, but not limited to, distributing notices to the LEP population);

- (v) requiring the consideration of contingency plans for unexpected events;
- (vi) providing a mechanism for anyone without internet access to participate, through telephone access or other alternatives, in virtual hearings and meetings;
- (vii) providing a mechanism to consider the accessibility of the location when in-person hearings and meetings are conducted;
- (viii) maintaining resources for obtaining translation and interpretation services;
- (ix) ensuring all public hearing notices include instructions for registration (if required), how to make comments, and how to request language assistance services and/or reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids and services, including if any requests should be submitted by a date certain before an event;
- (x) providing a mechanism for identifying the location of any information repositories; and
- (xi) providing a mechanism for residents to access relevant information and consideration of whether a centralized public location within the community would meet the IL EPA's outreach goals.

3. The Non-Discrimination Coordinator(s) will ensure that appropriate staff receive training on the commitments expressed in the revised Enhanced Public Participation Plan, as related to public involvement in environmental permitting processes and other processes undertaken by IL EPA that include public engagement.
4. IL EPA will submit to EPA for review a revised copy of its Enhanced Public Participation Plan within 90 days of the effective date of this Agreement, consistent with the considerations identified above. EPA will review the revised Enhanced Public Participation Plan and provide any comments within 30 days.
5. Within 30 days of receiving EPA's comments, IL EPA will address EPA's comments and submit its draft Enhanced Public Participation Plan, including a translated Enhanced Public Participation Plan in all appropriate languages, for public

comment for 30 days. After the public comment period ends, IL EPA will review comments and finalize the Enhanced Public Participation Plan within 30 days. Thereafter, IL EPA will publish the final Enhanced Public Participation Plan, translated in all appropriate languages, on its website and in print.

D. IL EPA's Plan to Provide Meaningful Access for Persons with Limited English Proficiency ("LEP")

1. IL EPA will revise its LAP to include the additional commitments as outlined below.
2. IL EPA will conduct an appropriate analysis as described in EPA's LEP Guidance⁸ to identify the appropriate language groups within IL EPA's service area that may need language services and determine what language services or mix of language services the IL EPA needs to provide (*e.g.*, qualified interpreters and translators) to ensure that individuals with LEP can meaningfully participate in IL EPA's programs, services, and activities.
3. IL EPA will ensure that translations of vital documents done through an electronic, machine translated service (such as Google Translate), are verified through a qualified translator before they are provided to the public or individual customer. Further, IL EPA will use caution to ensure that it protects personal privacy whenever using an electronic translation system to ensure sensitive information is not accidentally released to the public. IL EPA will review, revise, publicize, and implement its existing written LAP to ensure meaningful access to all IL EPA's programs, services, and activities for individuals with LEP, at no cost to those individuals. As part of this plan, IL EPA will:
 - (a) Translate vital documents⁹ of general interest into the appropriate languages as identified in the section above, for individuals with LEP who are served by or likely to be encountered by the IL EPA's programs, services, and activities;

⁸ Guidance to Environmental Protection Agency Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons, 69 F.R. 35602, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2004-06-25/pdf/04-14464.pdf>

⁹ Whether or not a document (or the information it disseminates or solicits) is "vital" may depend upon the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved, and the consequence to the LEP person if the information in question is not provided accurate or in a timely fashion. (See EPA's 2004 Guidance to Environmental Protection Agency Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2004/06/25/04-14464/guidance-to-environmental-protection-agency-financial-assistance-recipients-regarding-title-vi>)

- (b) Translate vital documents of individual interest to a particular individual with LEP or group individuals with LEP (*e.g.*, an individual with LEP wishing to file a grievance);
- (c) Provide for simultaneous or consecutive oral interpretation by qualified interpreters of live proceedings (*e.g.*, town hall meetings and public hearings) and programs, services, and activities in prominent and other requested languages, and the ability for individuals with LEP to participate in those proceedings to a substantially similar extent as persons with English proficiency can participate (*e.g.*, accommodate LEP individuals wishing to provide comments during meetings, hearings, proceedings, programs, services, and activities hosted by IL EPA);
- (d) IL EPA will create a mechanism to allow the public, to provide feedback on the accuracy and quality of IL EPA's language assistance services;
- (e) Utilize IL EPA's social media platforms to provide translated vital information and increase messaging to populations with LEP;
- (f) Identify in the LAP how IL EPA will provide qualified language services, for example, whether through qualified employees or through a contract for such services.

- 4. Within 150 days of the effective date of this Agreement, IL EPA will submit to EPA for review a draft copy of its revised LAP. EPA will review the draft LAP and provide any comments within 30 days.
- 5. Within 30 days of receiving EPA's comments, IL EPA will address EPA's comments and submit its draft LAP, including a translated LAP in all appropriate languages, for public comment for 30 days. After the public comment period ends, IL EPA will review comments and finalize the LAP within 30 days. IL EPA will publish the final LAP, translated in all appropriate languages, on its website and in print.

E. IL EPA Plan to Ensure Meaningful Access for Persons with Disabilities

- 1. IL EPA has prepared its Plan to Ensure Meaningful Access for Persons with Disabilities, which includes commitments requested by EPA, as described below.
- 2. IL EPA must ensure public meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities by developing and implementing policies and procedures by providing

individuals with disabilities the opportunity for meaningful access and opportunity for full participation in its programs, services, and activities.

3. Upon request with reasonable notice, IL EPA will provide, at no cost, appropriate auxiliary aids and services to individuals with disabilities, (including but not limited to, qualified interpreters to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and to other individuals, as necessary), to ensure effective communication or an equal opportunity to participate fully in benefits, activities, programs and services provided by IL EPA in a timely manner.
4. IL EPA will continue to ensure that its facilities and other facilities utilized by IL EPA for public engagement activities are accessible to the public and physically accessible for individuals with disabilities.
5. Within 30 days of receiving EPA's comments, IL EPA will publish the Disability Plan, translated in all appropriate languages, on its website and in print, as appropriate.

F. TRAINING

1. Within 180 days of the effective date of this Agreement, IL EPA will forward to EPA for review a draft plan that ensures all its staff have been appropriately trained on federal non-discrimination obligations, anti-bias and cultural competency, and that ensures that appropriate staff have been trained on the revised Grievance Procedures, revised Enhanced Public Participation Plan, revised LAP and the Plan to Ensure Meaningful Access for Persons with Disabilities. IL EPA may request assistance from EPA for any of the training required in this Agreement.
2. Within 180 days of the effective date of this Agreement, IL EPA will forward to EPA for review a draft plan for ensuring that the aforementioned training, as applicable, is a routine part of the on-boarding process for new employees and is given regularly as refresher training to all employees. EPA will review the draft training plan and provide any comments to IL EPA within 30 days. IL EPA will respond to EPA's comments, discuss with EPA any concerns if necessary, and within 30 days of receiving EPA's comments, IL EPA will forward a final copy of the training plan to EPA and implement the above plan.

VI. GENERAL

- A. In consideration of IL EPA's implementation of commitments and actions described in Sections III, IV and V of this Agreement, the Federal Agencies will toll its time period for issuing preliminary findings for EPA Complaint No. 01RNO-21-R5 and not issue a decision containing findings on the merits of the complaint.
- B. EPA will monitor the implementation of the obligations in Sections III, IV and V of this Agreement, as appropriate, to ensure they are fully implemented. Once the obligations of this Agreement are satisfied, EPA will issue a letter documenting closure of its monitoring actions in EPA File No. 01RNO-21-R5 and closure of the complaint as of the date of that letter.
- C. EPA will review and provide feedback about any documentation submitted by IL EPA demonstrating completion of each obligation and will provide an assessment as to whether the documentation satisfies the obligations within 30 days of receipt of each such submission.
- D. EPA will, upon request, provide technical assistance to IL EPA regarding any of the civil rights obligations previously referenced.

VII. COMPUTATION OF TIME AND NOTICE

- A. As used in this Agreement, "day" will mean a calendar day. In computing any period of time under this Agreement, where the last day would fall on a Saturday, Sunday, or federal or state holiday, the period will run until the close of business of the next working day.
- B. Service of any documents required by this Agreement will be made personally via electronic mail as outlined below.
- C. Electronic documents submitted by IL EPA to EPA via email will be sent to the following email address: anhthu.hoang@epa.gov, with a copy to the Case Manager: katelyn.liesner@epa.gov.
- D. Documents submitted by EPA will be sent to the following email address: chris.pressnall@illinois.gov. Documents mailed by EPA will be mailed to: 1021 North Grand Ave. East (#38), P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276.

VIII. EFFECT OF THE AGREEMENT

- A. IL EPA understands that, if necessary, EPA may conduct a site visit, interview staff, and request such additional reports or data as are necessary for EPA to determine whether IL EPA has fulfilled the terms of this Agreement.
- B. IL EPA understands that the EPA will not close its monitoring of this Agreement until EPA determines that IL EPA has fully implemented this Agreement and that a failure to satisfy any term in this agreement may result in the EPA re-opening an investigation.
- C. If either Party desires to modify any portion of this Agreement because of changed conditions making performance impractical or impossible, or due to material change to the IL EPA's program or authorities, or for other good cause, the Party seeking a modification will promptly notify the other in writing, setting forth the facts and circumstances justifying the proposed modification. Any modification(s) to this Agreement will take effect only upon written agreement by the Director of IL EPA and the Director of OECRC.
- D. This Agreement constitutes the entire Agreement between IL EPA and the EPA regarding the matters addressed herein, and no other statement, promise, or agreement, made by any other person will be construed to change any commitment or term of this Agreement, except as specifically agreed to by IL EPA and the EPA in accordance with the provisions of Section VIII(C) above.
- E. This Agreement does not affect IL EPA's continuing responsibility to comply with Title VI or other federal nondiscrimination laws and the EPA's regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 5 and 7, nor does it affect the EPA's investigation of any other Title VI or other federal civil rights complaints or address any other matter not covered by this Agreement.
- F. This Agreement shall not be affected by future EJ legislation that may be adopted into Illinois law, including statutory requirements that create additional responsibilities for the IL EPA in its implementation of permitting programs, unless the new law's requirements conflict with the IL EPA's adherence to the commitments described herein. If a conflict arises, the IL EPA shall notify EPA, in writing, as soon as practicable following the enactment of the law and may propose modifications to this Agreement, as contemplated by Section VIII(C) above, to alleviate the conflict.

- G. The effective date of this Agreement is the date by which both Parties have signed the Agreement. This Agreement may be signed in counterparts. The Director, in their capacity as an official of the IL EPA, has the authority to enter into this Agreement for purposes of carrying out the activities listed in these paragraphs. The Director of OECRC has the authority to enter into this Agreement.

On behalf of IL EPA:



John J. Kim, Director

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

(Signature)

2/14/24

(Date)

On behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:

Hoang,
Anhthu

Digitally signed by Hoang,
Anhthu
Date: 2024.02.14
20:17:05 -05'00'

Anhthu Hoang, Acting Director

Office of External Civil Rights Compliance

Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights

February 14, 2024

(Date)