

Summary of data indicator working session

July 10, 2024, at Rondo Community Library

This document includes a summary of the feedback heard from attendees at the Cumulative Impacts working session on July 10, 2024, and does not constitute decision/s by MPCA for the final Cumulative Impacts rule.

Participation

On July 10, 2024, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) hosted a working session for the Cumulative Impacts Rulemaking at the Rondo Community Library. Fifty-five community members attended this event and shared their feedback and ideas with MPCA staff. These attendees included staff from environmental advocacy groups, representatives for regulated facilities, community members from Minnesota, and individuals from other states.

MPCA also received 4 comments on data indicators through the Smart Comment webpage between July 12, 2024 and August 14, 2024.

What data to include

Overall, there was consensus that the community agreed with the data categories provided on the handout. Most of the data options on the handout were discussed to some extent by the small groups. Some additional data options were mentioned. It could be difficult to narrow down the data options based on community feedback. We'll have to choose what **data is more comprehensive & covers multiple issues** to addresses community needs.

We generally heard the need for these datasets:

- **Incorporation of community health issues** like respiratory issues, hospitalizations, indoor air quality.
- **Local air quality and pollution that impacts people's health.** Community air monitoring would be helpful to include. Wildfire smoke and high AQI days were brought-up as well.
- **Traffic issues** and associated pollution is a significant concern.
- **Climate change projections and conditions** like extreme rain, droughts, heat, etc.
- **Water quality and especially exposure to runoff** from industrial or agricultural pollution.
- **Cancer risk** from pollution.
- **Built environment and important community institutions** like schools, hospitals, tree canopy.
- **Most of the socioeconomic issues proposed** like educational attainment, food insecurity, unemployment, cost-burdened households, old houses & exposure to lead pipes, health insurance access, rental households with emphasis on public housing or lower-income renters, racial inequality.

Based on this feedback, we will need to justify with research or not include this data:

- **Land pollution** – we did not hear as much concern about these facilities, so this list might need to be pared-down or focus on the worst pollution. Emphasizing compliance and enforcement problems could be another approach to focus on issues at these facilities.
- **Some of the air pollution & permitted facility metrics** – especially more complex indicators less familiar to the general public. These metrics could be simplified and/or we can focus on what impacts community health most.

- Other miscellaneous topics not covered as much – **drinking water at private wells, health worker shortage, airports.**

Data that needed more clarity and had questions included:

- Brownfields vs. clean-up sites vs. superfund sites:
 - There was a general lack of understanding from community on what the difference is between these sites. After an explanation was provided, community members seemed to understand the value of this information, especially if there is still polluted or if it's a major site of pollution.
- Impaired waters:
 - Further clarification/explanation is needed.

Other concerns or issues to keep in mind:

- **Level of detail for this data** and being clear on not including data because of the level of detail.
- **How will this tool be accessible and easily understandable.** Should we consider hiring an artist or artists to help make this tool?
- **Lived experience and people's stories:** how will this be a part of the work?
- **Economic benefits from industries are important too,** and some entities want a more focused tool that looks at direct emissions from facilities and pollution that has the strongest connection to impacting public health. Duluth was explicitly mentioned as having economic challenges more than the Twin Cities or Rochester.

Inclusion criteria

Generally, people understood that data will need to be narrowed down and the items we listed were logical approaches to doing this. However, concerns were expressed that actual metadata and detail around our indicators will need to be provided for the community to thoroughly vet which data to include in the cumulative impacts data tool. This conversation will continue at the November working session where we will provide the proposed data indicators to include with details including. It is largely based off New Jersey's approach and should include:

- A general description of the data.
- A specific indicator and measurement unit(s).
- The scientific rationale for including the indicator in the baseline analysis, and
- The publicly available data source(s) relied on to quantify the indicator and the method used to calculate the stressor values.
 - Pros and cons to using specific data sources – if there are multiple being considered.

What else should we know

Overall, there was robust conversation that covered a wide range of issues as it relates to the cumulative impact analysis. However, there were specific issues brought up more frequently from several different discussions.

About your neighborhood & pollution concerns –

Participants brought-up **community context and their challenges with reducing or adapting to pollution:**

- Climate change adaptation & their vulnerability to the urban heat island effect.
- Consumer products and facilities that are exposing people to toxic chemicals.
- How socioeconomic challenges like crime or higher rates of homelessness leaves people more vulnerable to pollution.
- Exposure to transportation pollution (chemical and non-chemical), and EJ communities not being able to afford cleaner transportation options. Cars, trains, and ships were all discussed.

They also discussed process challenges that they would like addressed:

- Our permitting process and non-expiring permits being excluded from being included in cumulative impact analyses.
- MNDOT was explicitly brought-up and we should collaborate with them to address traffic pollution.
- Translated materials and recordings were requested, and the Karen community was explicitly brought up as missing.
- Facilities should not have to obtain their own data for evaluating stressors, and the tool should make the cumulative impact analysis as logistically easy as possible. Minimize additional analysis or outside information.

Other Concerns for the Cumulative Impacts Analysis: Broader Social, Political and Economic Concerns -

- **Concerns with toxic products and younger residents being exposed** to this pollution. This is an opportunity to be proactive in addressing these challenges before people are exposed.
- **Community wants the non-expiring permits to be addressed** in terms of how cumulative impacts from pollution influences our health.
- **Addressing areas with higher amounts of industry** and having limits to how many facilities can be in one geographic area.
- **Neighborhood assets** should be considered as well.
- **Challenges with defining community, bringing community into the process and people want a process to bring issues forward** to us to be screened or evaluated in the cumulative impact process.
- **Economic challenges and having a longer regulatory process** was brought-up by stakeholders. Ideas were brought-up to highlight how facilities are remediating and avoiding pollution, their contributions to the tax base and generally having economic measures to consider positive benefits.