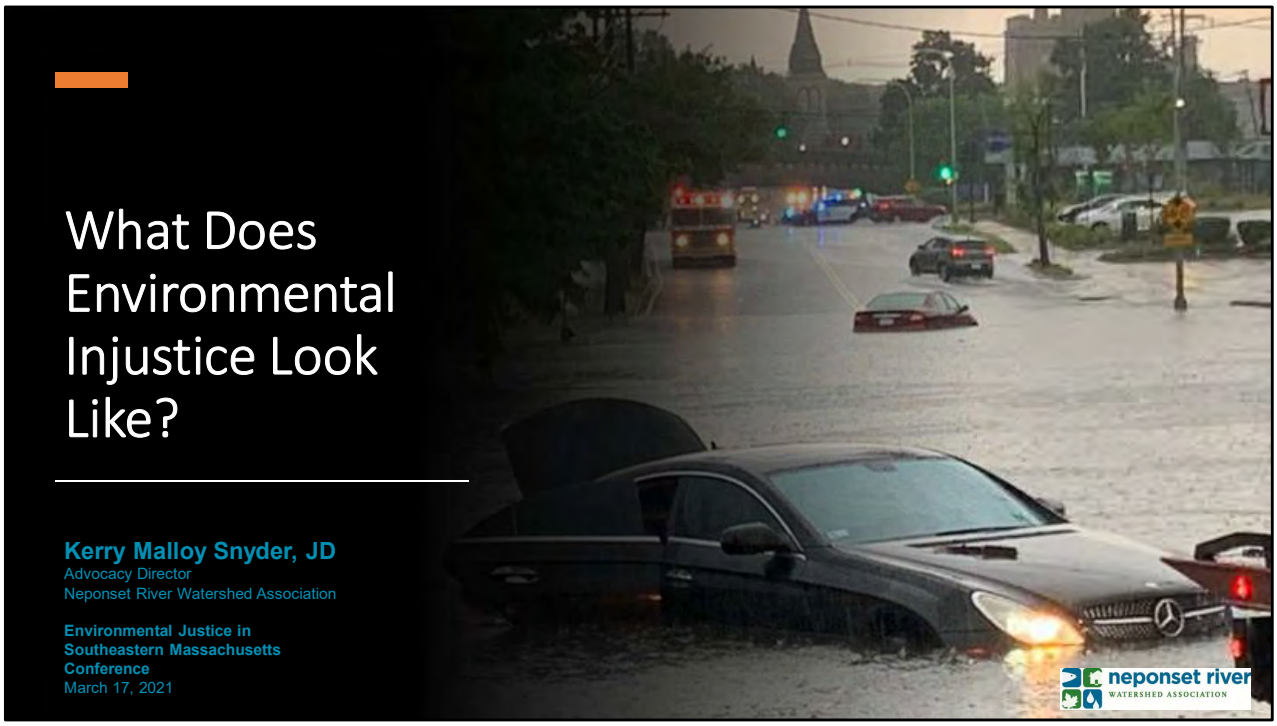
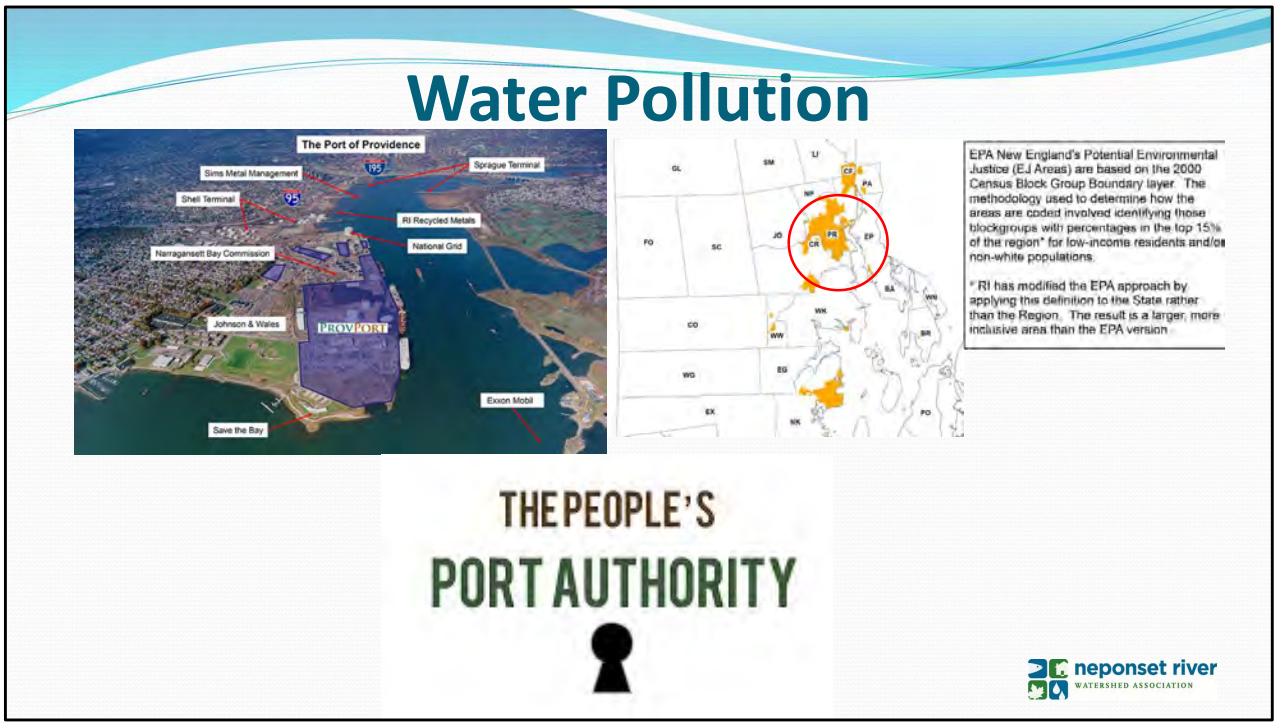


There is no way I can discuss all the ways in which environmental injustice manifests, I hope these few examples will help you think about your communities and recognize opportunities to prioritize and/or achieve environmental justice.

Public Health and Safety Communication

EJ communities are often so designated when the people who live there predominantly speak a language other than English, which requires communication to be adapted. In the Lower Neponset, where recreational fishing and boating is both safe and highly encouraged, it is unsafe to eat the fish caught as a result of legacy industrial pollution. The community has been trying for years to get the state to install more inclusive signage that makes this clear, because (anecdotally), many families fish with the intent to eat what's caught, which puts them at risk. The problem has been exacerbated by the bureaucracy necessary to disentangle—MassDPH is responsible for public health signage, while DCR owns the land on which the signs must be placed. Fortunately, there is finally an open dialogue occurring, and we expect new signs to be installed later this year.



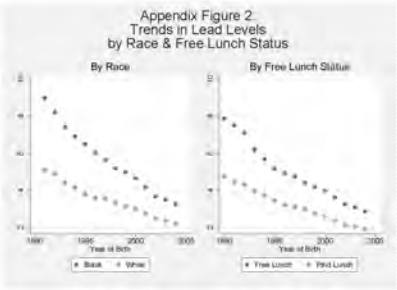
Water Pollution

Providence is the major RI industrial port. It's also surrounded by designated EJ Communities. The west side of the river in particular has been burdened with port activities that pollute the environment, including stormwater that runs into the river, storage of hazardous materials, etc. Moreover, these activities block public access to the river. The People's Port Authority was borne out of residents' frustration with this burden. They have been advocating for a seat at the decisionmaking table, and for industries to clean up their acts.

Providence is by no means alone. Industry is often located within EJ communities, and both pollute and block access to recreational waters. (See Rev. Sowers description of the Weymouth Compressor Station on the Fore River, among many others.)

Drinking Water Supply

Aizer & Currie, *Lead and Juvenile Deliquency: New Evidence from Linked Birth, School and Juvenile Detention Records*, NATIONAL BUREAU OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH (May 2017)



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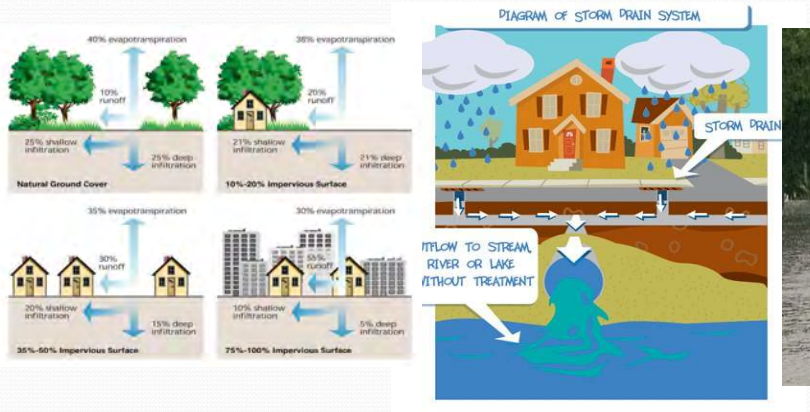
Drinking water contamination

Hyannis water district includes much of the commercial activities of the Barnstable area. Not surprisingly, it also includes a large EJ community, so designated based on minority population and lower-income levels. Within the district, and near the wellheads, is the Barnstable Airport and a firefighting academy. As a result of activities in both these areas, the drinking water has been contaminated by PFAS.

Lead is another contaminant that disproportionately burdens EJ communities. Lead is found in pipes within or leading to homes built before 1940, when lead pipes stopped being installed. It's also found in pipe soldering (used up until 1980s). Acidic water (water with low pH) can cause the lead to leach into the water residents drink. While we've made great strides in reducing overall exposure to lead, the issue continues to disproportionately affect minority and lower-income residents. The problem is exacerbated by programs that incentivize the replacement of lead pipes, because they are not practically accessible to lower-income homeowners.

Stormwater Flooding



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Stormwater pollution/flooding

Many environmental justice communities are found in urban and suburban areas—in other words, areas that have been built out. The environment in these areas have been altered in such a way as to disrupt the natural absorption of precipitation. We've placed hard and impervious surfaces over everything—roofs, driveways, sidewalks, streets—so when the rain falls, it simply accumulates or runs off. We've managed the issue by creating stormwater management systems, designed to carry the water away from these areas to the nearest waterway. The problem is, this water is untreated as it enters our streams. Moreover, our infrastructure is old and undersized for today's extreme storms that result from climate change. This means that inland flooding and pollution will occur with increasing frequency, and EJ communities will bear the brunt of it. Fortunately, many towns have taken advantage of the state's MVP program to try to identify and prioritize projects to make communities more resilient and reduce the risk to people and the environment. Unfortunately, the MVP program really isn't funded well enough to help towns implement priority programs—but you can help by advocating for more resources!

Next Week:
Access to Recreational Waters

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Access to recreational waters is a problem for many environmental justice communities—whether it's physical, legal or other types of barriers. We'll delve into this more in Session 2 of this conference, so I hope you'll register and join us!

THANK YOU!

Questions?

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