

## **Environmental Justice and Civil Rights**

Concern for environmental justice stems from Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," signed February 11, 1994 by President Clinton. In this order (Section 1-101), "each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States." It is important to note that the following analysis only addresses indicators to determine the presence or absence of minority and/or low-income communities in a study area.

## **Existing Condition**

Social Setting: Area Residents and County

E.O.12898 requires Federal agencies to respond to the issue of environmental justice by "identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human activities on minority and low income populations. According to a Social Assessment of the Shawnee National Forest (Welch and Evans 2003), "Several key characteristics distinguish southern Illinois from the rest of the state. Perhaps the most striking is the level of poverty in the region...Southern Illinois, still recovering from job losses due to coal mine closings, had relatively high rates of unemployment in 2000;...Jackson and Massac counties had the lowest rates in the region." (Welch and Evans 2003:8). The area is also characterized by low population density and declining population numbers. The project area is located entirely in Jackson County, IL. Based on the US Census Bureau estimates, in 2006 there were 57,778, which was a decline of 3.1% since 2000. Population had declined the decade before (1990-2000) another 2.4%% (US Census Bureau). Data Table 1 is a summary of the general population characteristics of the county. In total, between 1980 and 2006 the population of Jackson County has declined 6.2%.

The racial and ethnic composition of Jackson County changed little between 1990 and 2006 remaining predominantly white (85.1% and 80.7% respectively), although African Americans now make up a larger percentage of the population (10.4% and 12.5% respectively). Education levels have risen from 69.7% of the population having a high school diploma in 1980 to over 85% in 2000. College graduates have also risen from 26.4% in 1980 to 32% in 2000.

The U.S. Census Bureau does not provide a specific definition for "low-income." Rather, the term is used interchangeably with "poverty." In this regard, the Census Bureau established a set of income cutoffs/thresholds to determine the poverty status of families. The Census Bureau determines poverty by comparing the total income of each family against its corresponding threshold. If the total family income is less than the corresponding cutoff, the family is classified as "below the poverty level." In Jackson County 25.2% of the population is below the poverty level in 2004 where as in Illinois only 12.4% of the population was below the poverty level (Table 1).

Jackson County workers face only slightly higher unemployment rates than the state as a whole (Table 1). Unemployment during 2007 was 4.7 and 4.6 for Jackson County and the State, respectively. At \$24,946 the Median household income in Jackson County is well below the state value of \$42,994. The median family income for Jackson County is \$40,950, whereas the median family income for the state as a whole is \$50,046 (Table 1). In short, the overall economic well-being of Jackson County is relatively low.

In sum, currently almost 15% of Jackson County population is made up of minorities and over 25% are living in poverty according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Because the percentage of individual living below the poverty level (25.2%) is almost twice the state percentage (12.4%), Jackson County is considered an environmental justice community.

### **Direct and Indirect Effects of Alternatives on Environmental Justice Concerns**

The impact of public lands as lands unavailable for taxes to the state or counties in which they lie, however, does impact counties with a high percentage of public ownership when other sources of local income are not available. This was initially remedied in 1908 by passage of the Twenty-Five Percent Fund Act (P.L. 60-136). This provides dollars for schools and roads generated from taking 25% of the gross receipts of any revenue-producing activity on National Forest land. Twenty-five percent of these receipts were annually allocated on a pro-rata basis, where each county is paid according to how many acres of National Forest land is in the county.

During the 1990's, National Forest's timber receipts were reduced drastically because of public lawsuits against the Forest Service on timber sale after timber sale for a wide variety of environmental reasons. The reduction of timber revenues, and consequently a reduction in the amount counties were getting via the Twenty-Five Percent Fund Act, prompted Congress in October of 2000 to pass the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. One purpose of this law was to stabilize payments to counties to provide funding for schools and roads that supplement other available funds. Jackson County, along with all the other Forest counties, has elected to receive their funds under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. In addition, payment in lieu of taxes (PILT) funds for Jackson County increased 95% between 1999 and 2007, therefore this project, or any of the alternatives selected, will not have an affect on the amount the counties receive under this 2000 law; the proposed action and alternatives do not pose a disproportionately high and adverse environmental, human health, economic or social effect on the counties.

In addition, it is unlikely that the Buttermilk Hill-Talbott Hollow Blowdown Project will have a disproportionately negative impact on any minority populations and individuals living below the poverty level. The great majority (76%) of the individuals living below the poverty level are located in more urban or metropolitan areas: Carbondale (61%) and Murphysboro (15%). The Project is located in rural northwest Jackson County, nearly 20 miles from the metropolitan area of Carbondale.

### Cumulative Effects

The Buttermilk Hill-Talbott Hollow Blowdown Project will not have disproportionate direct or indirect negative effects on any minority populations and individuals living below the poverty level. Therefore there will be no cumulative effects.

Table 1. General Population Characteristics, Jackson County, IL

General Population Characteristics	Jackson County	% of Population	
		Jackson	IL
Total Population (2006 estimate):	57,778	100	
Total Population (2000)	59,612	100	
Total Population (1990)	61,067	100	
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	30,429	51.0	49.1
Female	29,183	49.0	50.0
<b>Ethnic Group</b>			
White	48,158	80.8	75.1
African American	7,759	13.0	12.3
Asian	1,806	3.0	3.6
Hispanic or Latino	1,443	2.4	12.5
Native American	184	0.3	0.9
<b>Age</b>			
0-18	11,482	19.3	25.7
18-64	41,555	69.7	61.9
65+	6,575	11.0	12.4
<b>Education Level</b>			
High School diploma	27,838	85.0	80.4
College degree or higher	10,447	32.0	24.4
<b>Economic Characteristics</b>			
In labor force (2007)	33,454	61.8	63.9
Median household income*	\$ 24,946		\$ 42,994
Unemployed (2007)	1,578	4.7	4.6
Median family income*	\$ 40,950		\$ 50,046
Per capita income*	\$ 15,755		\$ 21,587
Families below poverty level	1,888	14.7	9.2
Individuals below poverty (2004)	13,463	25.2	12.4
* 1999 dollars			