

## *Burning Injustice and Wings of Dust : What's Next*

Have you ever stopped to think about where your waste goes after it's disposed of, or what it might be like to live next to a polluting facility? Unfortunately, many minority and low income communities have been targeted by industries when deciding where to locate [hazardous](#) waste sites and other polluting facilities. Unfortunately, marginalized communities are more likely to be exposed to environmental risks than other communities. Because of this, they are often forced to endure the effects of pollution exposure and environmental degradation.

Colorado is no exception to environmental justice issues. Low income and minority communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change and are harmed by other [hazards](#) across the state including [oil and gas wells next to schools](#), [refineries operating next to Latino neighborhoods](#) and [homes built atop Superfund sites](#). The [Colorado Office of Environmental Justice](#) has a new [EnviroScreen](#) tool to document environmental stressors and impacts to disproportionately impacted communities across the state.

Eagle County, for example, is home to the [Eagle Mine Superfund](#) site—a former economic asset that became an environmental hazard. In 1983, the mine was abandoned, causing the tunnels to flood and turn the Eagle River orange. By 1986, the site was declared a U.S. EPA Superfund site, triggering a long and complex [cleanup effort](#). This included the installation of eight bulkheads to regulate water levels, preventing mineral-laden water from seeping into the river; the consolidation of two tailings ponds, and the construction of a water treatment plant to filter out heavy metals before releasing the water into the Eagle River. Without these measures, the river would quickly become inundated with harmful minerals again. Although the cleanup is still ongoing and slow, the area's environmental impact continues to shrink.

As the world grapples with the escalating climate crisis, the need to address the [disproportionate](#) environmental burdens faced by low-income communities and communities of color has never been more urgent. These communities are fighting not only for clean air, water, and land but also for their fundamental right to [health](#), safety, and a sustainable future. Achieving [environmental justice](#) requires ensuring that all communities receive equal protection from environmental hazards and have an equal voice in decision-making processes that directly impact their environments. While we are still far from achieving this goal, it is vital that we integrate environmental justice into all climate action efforts and ensure that environmental injustices are never ignored.

## What You Can Do

There are actions you can take to help fight environmental injustices in and out of our community.

- **Know Where Your Waste Goes and Sign Up for a Recycling Tour:** Join us for a FREE tour of the Eagle County recycling, landfill, and household hazardous waste facilities and the compost facility at Vail Honeywagon. The guided tours will be held in English and Spanish, and they are open to all! Sign up today [here](#).
- **Support Environmental Justice Organizations:** Consider supporting the [Community Market](#), a local organization tackling food security for underserved communities, or [Conservation Colorado](#), an organization fighting to drive policy and elevate leaders that advance climate action and environmental justice.
- **Tell the US Treasury No Subsidies for Waste Incinerators:** A generation of aging waste incinerators are reaching their end-of-life, providing an opportunity to move towards better “zero-waste” policies that generate less waste. A [bill](#) to limit waste incineration was vetoed in Colorado, so [Tell the U.S. Treasury](#) to not provide bailouts for incinerators.
- **Recognize the Ute Tribes**
  - The Ute Tribes are the Indigenous peoples whose lands we currently reside on. Visit [this website](#) to learn more about the Ute Tribe. To learn more about the environmental threats the Ute People currently face, visit [this website](#) Remember that recognition of settler colonialism is merely the first step one can take to be an ally to Indigenous peoples. Visit [this resource](#) for ideas on going beyond land acknowledgements.

To learn more about the films visit, [Burning Injustice - Story of Stuff](#) and [Wings Of Dust](#)